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Duke Nukem Forever,
Braveheart, Messiah

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18 **Brutally Honest Reviews**

Tomb Raider III   Heretic II   Thief

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use the BEST HARDWARE

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NORWAY

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With the power of **3Dfx,**

John Romero turns his legendary vision...

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you never thought possible.

TEAM UP &

"don't outrun me Sulky we got a date with the endzone"

Thorn

commando Thorn sees his chance to be a hero

"shake your boots commandos I need cover fire here"

Sulky

heading upfield ball in hand Sulky realizes she's target #1

Thorn

PsycheCat

Sulky

MadMac

Malcomb

Tinexo

32%

2   1   6   2

Ferret killed by MadMac.
JimG killed by PsychoCat.
Sulky recovers the ball for YOUR team!

4 games in all
multiple arenas 10 minute matches fast & fierce
many ways to play one way to win: teamwork

Capture the Flag
the name says it: capture and hold as many flags as you can for as long as you can

BaseTag
score points by destroying enemy base stations while defending your own

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hunt the other team to rack up kills, then protect weakened teammates or you'll be overrun

Real-time combat! Heft your broadsword and mete out punishment in a purely medieval manner!

dimensions,
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Revolutionary 3d action engine gives you complete freedom of movement.

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Funny, but no flight sims appeared in the gaming decathlon. Why is that?   PC ACCELERATOR   February 1999

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ON THE COVER

In our continuing quest to bring you real women on the cover whenever possible, we took the opportunity for a photo shoot with Holt Chikk, the lovely model who plays *Drakan's* Rynn. We can neither confirm nor deny that one of the editors managed to get her phone number afterwards.

PREVIEWS

55 DIABLO 2
If Blizzard's streak of million-sellers is gonna end, it won't be here

60 STARLANCER
From the people who brought you *Wing Commander III*, it's another one coming from Digital Anvil

62 NOCTURNE
It's like *Alone In The Dark* meets *Resident Evil*...wait a second

66 FLEET COMMAND
If you want to know how to destroy Iraq from sea and air, this will show you

68 LOOSE CANNONS
Digital Anvil's "unique" (nothing like Redline or I82) car and on-foot shooter

70 DESCENT 3
In the event of motion sickness, keep a bucket by the computer screen

74 MECH WARRIOR 3
Giant robots galore, and alternate universes where they're made of Legos

77 HIRED GUNS
The *Unreal* engine is gettin' all tactical with a remake of an Amiga, ahem, classic

80 BRAVEHEART
Wants to teach *Myth* a thing or two, and find out exactly how delicious haggis really is

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83 Freelancers vs. staff:
The epic struggle rages on in the reviews

84 TOMB RAIDER 3
Sorry, we can't get that worked up over this glorified mission pack. OK, now look at this screenshot

86 HALF-LIFE
Find out if the December issue's so rating holds steady. It can't get any higher, can it?

88 POWERSLIDE
The racer that might take its name a little too far

89 CYBERSTRIKE 2
These giant robots spend only a little more time online than your average porn hound

90 TEST DRIVE 5
The first time we give a game a rating less than its sequel number — not gonna be the last, though

92 HERETIC II
The Keebler elf — er. Corvus the Elf is back for some more radical Biblical revisionism. And elf bust

94 FUTURE COP
You can play this game on a Mac too. but don't hold that against it too much

95 MASK OF ETERNITY
Aargh, another adventure about elves and dragons, and it's good too

96 MOTO RACER 2
Another contender for the perennial title of "best looking games on two wheels"

97 SPEEDBUSTERS
Seeing this game will make you wonder why *SF Rush* hasn't been ported yet

98 THIEF THE DARK PROJECT
Our reviewer lobbied us for a so rating. Is it really that good or is he just high?

100 CARMAGEDDON 2
The greatest road rage therapy ever invented now gets all 3D-accelerated

101 VIPER RACING
Any licensed racer that lets you actually wreck very expensive cars is good in our book

CELEBRITY APPEARANCES
Sarah Michelle Gellar, Leela Bosworth, Linda Fiorentino, Richard Chamberlain, Molly Ringwald, JoLu, Dyan Cannon, Syn Banks, Ricki Lake, Cliff Richards, Biff Rusten, Ernest Borgnine, Andre the Giant, Heidi Fleiss, Judd Nelson, Johnny Wilson, Gary Whitta, Jimmy "The Greek", Tina Turner, The Village People, Dave Plota, Sylvester Stallone, Denise Richards, Ed McMahon, Shirley MacLaine, Dan Knotts, and many, many more

COLUMNS

EDITOR'S LETTER 14
We're the greatest, blah blah blah, and notice anything different about the issue this month? Also: A deep malaise settles over the staff

FIRST PERSON 132
A deep malaise (or mayonnaise) pervades the column as sci-fi gets bashed — what we really want is a game based on a western where you get to ride horsies like in *Zelda*

THE DISC 16

A deep malaise pervades the disc page as the disc editor falls further into the seedy world of crack cocaine. Also: 2 discs, baby!

You're an angel.
Your name is "Malachi."
That's ancient Hebrew for "Bad Ass Mother."

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Have you noticed something different about **PC Accelerator**? Look closely. No, we haven't stopped being ridiculously mannish (read: childish) and we haven't added coverage of turn-based puzzle games. What we have done is improve our paper quality and add an extra disc (for those of you who get the CD version, that is). Why? Because we love you (not that way, you perverts). Sure, we have always been the most entertaining and brutally honest mag around, but now with two discs and some fat paper we have made the package complete. What else do you want? Blood? Free sex? Quality time? A big hug?

Inside this issue you'll find our unique brand of game coverage that simply cannot be matched (nor would anyone dare try). Our cover story gives an honest (almost psychic, or you could say psychotic) look at the games that will shape 1999. It also features some lovely photography (read: hot babes) — we just included that as an added bonus. Hard-hitting reviews, dead celebrities, and random pictures of half-naked women should round out the experience. Just a reminder that reading a few articles in PCXL is not acceptable: We create this magazine to be read from cover to cover. If you aren't reading it sideways, then you're missing half the fun.

Our goal is to create a magazine that is as entertaining to read as it is to make. Sure, we spend many late nights in the office busting our asses, but damn if we don't have a good time doing it. Features like last month's "Drinking and Driving Games" are meant to entertain the readers *and* the staff. If we ever become bored with the magazine or our jobs, then we'll quit. PCXL is about having a good time and nothing else will be accepted (by you or by us). Enjoy!

MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*

THE TEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF

MIKE SALMON
HIS VALENTINE → Fuzzcle Laurie
FAVORITE MUPPET → Rozzy
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → The Vikings, garlic, beer (lovely beer), all sports, his mother, and sex
PREVIOUS JOB → A disc jockey at a country music radio station (yuck!)
NOW PLAYING → *Half-Life, Rod Alert, Need for Speed III, Thief*

CRAIG LEE/PHOTO & "FRIEND"

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

ROB SMITH
HIS VALENTINE →
Live-in girlfriend Sandy
FAVORITE MUPPET →
Waldorf and Statler
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → Sheffield Utd (soccer), marmalade (jelly), lager (beer!), lassies (babes), Mike's mother
PREVIOUS JOB → Created a role-playing magazine (can you say "geek"?)
NOW PLAYING → *Half-Life, Red Alert, Need for Speed III, some stupid click-fest (not the insect, the game)* slie

SANDY RODRIGUEZ

SCARECROW

HECTOR SALAZAR
HIS VALENTINE → Real Doll "Leah"
FAVORITE MUPPET → Sam the Eagle
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → Olde English Over the beer, the furniture polish)
PREVIOUS JOB → Coat-check guy at the POXL offices
NOW PLAYING → A starring rendition of "La Bamba"

"SEAH"

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

DAN EGGER
HIS VALENTINE → Sears catalog
FAVORITE MUPPET → Animal
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → Pepsi, chick flicks, the Sixers, big-haired women (Mike's mother), his previous job
PREVIOUS JOB → Taught first grade
NOW PLAYING → *Half-Life, Red Alert, Pro Boarders, Commagodden z*

SEARS BABE

DISC/ASSISTANT EDITOR

ED LEE
HIS VALENTINE →
Victoria's Secret catalog
FAVORITE MUPPET →
The Swedish chef
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → Afternoon breakfast, the phrase "coo cola," gangsta rap, Mike's mother
PREVIOUS JOB → Post-collegiate slacker (searching for truth, beer, women, and the easy way)
NOW PLAYING → *Half-Life, Red Alert, Free Cell, Populous, StarCraft: Brood War*

VICTORIA'S SECRET CUTIE

ART DIRECTOR

QI DOROQUEZ
HIS VALENTINE → Girlfriend Cynthia
FAVORITE MUPPET → Count Dracula
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → All things slick and twisted, especially pictures. You should see the emails he sends out. Oh, and Mike's mother
PREVIOUS JOB → Taught college; dismissed for "undisclosed" activity
NOW PLAYING → *Red Alert, NHL 99, QuarkXPress 4: The Colored Project*

CYNTHIA DEL PAVETA

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR

KYLE LeBOEUF
HIS VALENTINE → Suzanne (but she loves it back, ask her old il)
FAVORITE MUPPET → Beaker
UNNATURAL LOVE OF → Sabra Nevada (not the mountains, d'zoh!), the beer), Mike's mother, earthy women garments with genital piercings (that rules out Mary Lou Retton)
PREVIOUS JOB → Mixed Yosemite Sam, Daffy Duck, and Bugs Bunny at Warner Bros. (or hell)
NOW PLAYING → *Red Alert, Star-Craft, Future Cop, all things French*

SUZANNE NELSON

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adrenaline vault

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DISCIN' ON THE CEILIN'

It's once, twice, three times a discy!

This month we're pleased to bring you an exclusive Lionel Richie medley of his greatest hits! Take it away Lionel!

"Hello" / Is it Disc you're looking for?

Well my friends the time has come / To install same demos and have some fun / Throw away the work to be done / Let the demos play on (play on, play on) / Everybody tool, everybody patch / Lose yourself in wild romance / We're going to / Party, Karamu, Fiesta, Forever / Come on and spin along /All Disc long (all disc) / All Disc long (all disc)

Thanks Lionel, and be sure to check out all we've got going on our (surprise, surprise) TWO discs! Yes, this is going to be a regular thing from now on so save up the green for the disc subscription if you don't already have one.

	DEMO	PATCHES	TOOLS	MAPS	A/V	DISC 1 OR 2	RATING	Title	Description
						2	6	3D CARD DRIVERS	Updated reference drivers for 3dfx and Nvidia, and card-specific TNT drivers
	D					2	8	BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD: BUNGHOLE IN ONE	
	D					2	8	BLOOD 2	Band-Aids to stop the bleeding
	D					1	6	CYBERSTRIKE 2	Play it for free – it'll be your last chance
	D					1	8	DEMONSTAR	Shoot demons and stuff
	D					1	8	DESCENT 3	But is it good enough to be Descent 4
	D					2	8	FLIGHT SIMS	A collection of flight sim demos for all you bomber jacket wearing flyboys
						1	11	HALF-LIFE	The version 1.0.0.6 patch, a couple player models, a DM map, and find out how to reduce Net-play lag
	D					1	8	HEAVY GEAR II	Even heavier than the first
	D					1	4	KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY	
	D					1	5	KLINGON HONOR GUARD	
	D					1	8	MOTO RACER 2	Two wheels, and it's good
	D					2		NASCAR REVOLUTION	
	D					1	8	NFL BLITZ	Somebody help the Panthers win a game!
	D					2	8	QUAKE II	What disc is complete without the master
						1	8	RAINBOW SIX	The latest patch and a cool multiplay mod
	D					2	8	REQUIEM	Arch-angels do battle
	D					2	8	RUTHLESS.COM	The other Tom Clancy game
	D					2	8	SHOGO	Buggy game gets a good fixin'
	D					2	8	SIN	We all do it. Some more than others
	D					2	8	ROGUE SQUADRON	Just in time to psyche up for the prequel
	D					2	4	TEST DRIVE 5	See for yourself why it got a 4
	D					2	9	TEST DRIVE: OR2	It's the off-road version of a bad racing game
	D					2	9	THIEF	Can it possibly be as good as we say?
	D					2		THUNDER BRIGADE	Again, we have never heard of this game
	D					2	9	TRESPASSER	Shoot dinosaurs and stumble around
	D					2	9	UNREAL	Demigod of Unreal Resources separates the good from the bad in the best collection of maps, skins, mods, and everything else you could want
	D					1		UPRISING 2	Still rising?
	D					1		WARZONE 2100	Colored lighting in an RTS

→ Send your feedback, including suggestions for musical guests to disceditor@pcxl.com

---

Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, which is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. If this is too complicated or you lack the motor skills, then the bar on the left can also be used as well. Click left on the mouse to select items and click right again (on the main menu) to return to the previous screen, if you've not installed a game, then the rest should be elementary.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98, PENTIUM 133MHZ, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 6.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

Q: How can I suggest a musical artist to the "hi-fi on crack" disc editor?

A: At this point, our disc editor, Ed, is fully Windows 98 compatible. However, some backward-compatibility issues could turn in with some of the wiring in his head. So blame these Microsoft bastards (or novelties), not us!

Q: Why can't I play Half-Life on my 486, you idiots?

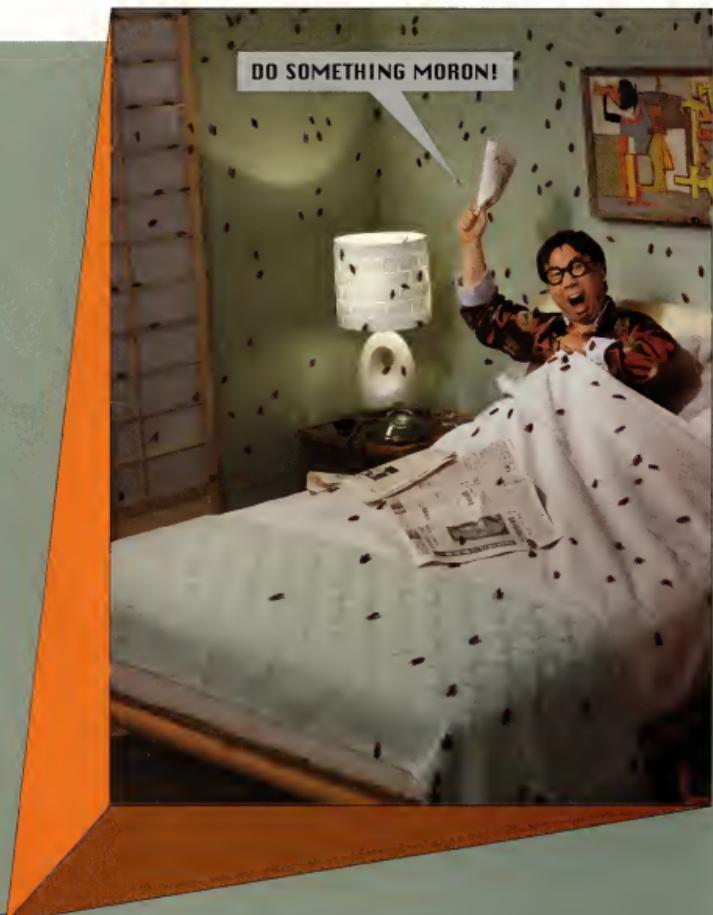A: Make sure your computer doesn't suck before asking stupid questions

Q: Why is their a small beach in my CD?

A: (real question) Apparently you live on a tropical island and should be out looking at half-naked native women. Also you may want to be nicer to your postman

In the year 2033 cancer has been cured, global warming has stopped, and there is only one species left on the endangered list...

t PCXL, we are always look-
ing into the future. Take,
for instance, what you are
reading right now. While the other
PC gaming magazines are mulling

over their "Best of 1998" awards,
we have turned our attention to the
rest of this year. Using science,
mythology, and the tried and tested
mathematics of sports gambling,

we have looked into the future and
have come up with our awards, not
necessarily for the best, but cer-
tainly for the most influential
games of 1999. ›››

1999 CRYSTAL BALL
AWARDS

PCXL'S PEERLESS PROGNOSTICATIONS
ON THE GAMES THAT WILL
REVOLUTIONIZE PC GAMING IN '99

Other predictions for 1999: #1 –› Ricki Lake will eat ... a lot

QUAKE ARENA COMMAND & CONQUER :TIBERIAN SUN DRAKAN HOMEWORLD ALIENS VS PREDATOR TOTAL ANNIHILATION
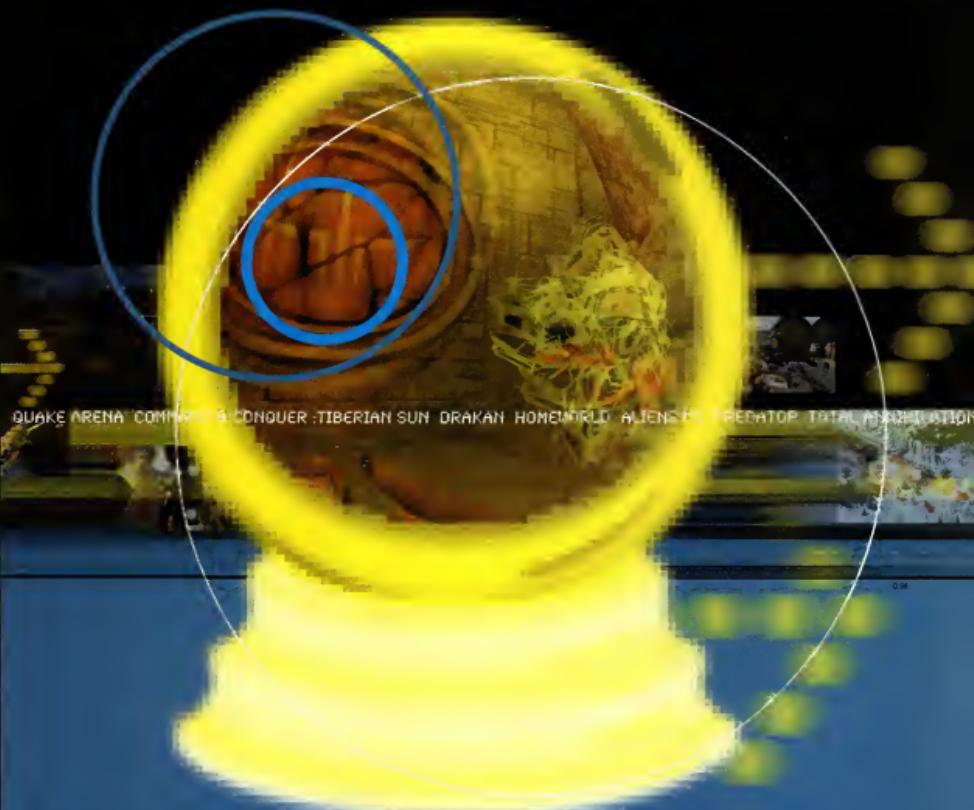
>>>THE SHOOTERS

▌▌GOLD MEDAL

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

THE "BEST SUPPORTING STRIP-PERS" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> 3D Realms
PUBLISHER--> GT Interactive
DUE--> When it's done (probably Q4)

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> In the move to true 3D-graphics engines, one good thing that was lost was fun INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS. *Duke Nukem 3D* was one of the first games to bring interactive environments to the last generation of shooters (the *Doom* age), and *Duke Nukem Forever* will likely be the first to implement recognizable settings in this generation of shooters.

When 3D Realms announced that it was scrapping plans to use the *Quake II* engine for *Duke Forever* in favor of the *Unreal* engine, many missed the real point of the switch. Besides *Unreal's* easier-to-use level editor, the engine enables devel-

opers to script events quickly and easily. Because of this we will see far more of the interactive environments and in-game events that made *Half-Life* so much fun. And knowing the developer, we predict these events will fit perfectly with the *Duke Nukem* style of sarcastic storytelling.

We saw the game before 3D Realms switched engines, and it includes sequences on the back of a fast-moving truck, a fully populated strip joint (it's a *Duke Nukem* game — whaddya you expect?) and high-poly characters (which ensures that you will visit the strip joint again and again, sicko). *Duke*

Forever also enables you to fully customize your characters for multiplayer action. You can change characteristics including sunglasses, hair, clothes, and body type to create a deathmatch persona that is as individual as you are.

How the game looks right now is anyone's guess. The title is all but guaranteed to be one of the biggest and most-hyped games of 1999, and you'll hear about it first in an upcoming issue of PCXL.

▌▌SILVER MEDAL

DAIKATANA

THE "COMEBACK KID" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Ion Storm
PUBLISHER--> Eidos
DUE--> Your guess is as good as ours (April '99)

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> No PC game in the last year has encountered as tough a road to completion as Ion Storm's *Daikatana*. Even though the game has been through numerous delays and a near-complete defection by its development team, *Daikatana* will still be one of the two revolutionary games of 1999 — BECAUSE IT HAS TO BE.

Since the very start, Ion Storm has rested its hopes on *Daikatana*. The company made a risky move by jumping into game development at full speed rather than slowly getting things started. Investing millions in a variety of game projects (and an overindulgent penthouse office), the company placed its future on the fortunes of *Daikatana*. Ion Storm cannot afford for the game not to be great. Despite what you've heard about the game never hitting stores, Ion Storm has no other choice, and it's going to pull it off.

▌▌BRONZE MEDAL

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

THE "DEATHMATCH INNOVATION" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Fox Interactive
PUBLISHER--> Fox Interactive
DUE--> March '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> Remember the thrill when you first played *StarCraft* multiplayer and discovered the intricacies of three-species deathmatch? Well, *Aliens vs. Predator* COULD VERY WELL BE THE STARCRAFT OF FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS. You can choose to play as the deadly Predator, a goo-dripping alien, or a well-armed colonial Marine. The Predator can camouflage himself in the environment, the alien has blinding speed and can climb up walls, and the humans have more weapons than a small European army.

It's this conflict among the three races that makes up the core of *Alien vs. Predator.* Imagine the possibilities of deathmatch and capture the flag with three distinct unit types, and you'll understand why this game is so important.

EXPERT'S VIEW ...

For a prediction of which shooter would be the best in 1999, we decided to go to the people on our TV who say they can tell the future every night, the Psychic Friends Network. Here's roughly how it went.

PSYCHIC FRIEND: Hello, my name is Diandra; when where you born?
PCXL: June
PSYCHIC FRIEND: What would you like to know?
PCXL: What first-person shooter will be the best in 1999?
PSYCHIC FRIEND: Huh? What do you mean?
PCXL: I'm trying to figure out the best PC game that's coming out next year
PSYCHIC FRIEND: Oh, I don't know
PCXL: But you're a psychic, shouldn't you know?
PSYCHIC FRIEND: I don't know anything about Nintendo games
PCXL: Well, which of these three do you think will do the best: Duke Nukem, Alien vs. Predator, or Daikatana?
PSYCHIC FRIEND: Umm, the one with the aliens sounds good, I guess
PCXL: Would you go out with me?
PSYCHIC FRIEND: No
PCXL: Is this your vision of the future or is it just me?
PSYCHIC FRIEND: I just don't want to go out with you. Do you want to ask anything else?
PCXL: Nope, the'll do. Bye
(total cost: $3.25 — not bad)

AND THE REST ...

REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL
THE "BEST USE OF BIBLICAL PLAGUES" AWARD
For including such cool powers as turning bad guys into salt. 3DO's proprietary engine has taken its lumps but the focus on subject matter and style could carry this one through.

AMEN
THE "MOST POST-APOCALYPTIC" AWARD
For its ultra-stereotypical setting in 2032 A.D. Otherwise, Cavedog's first foray into first-person shooters looks to be all that, and then some.

POINT MAN
THE "BEST NAME CHANGE" AWARD
Because it was retitled from the confusing name *Prax War*. The game also marks EA's first attempt at an FPS.

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>>>MORE THAN "JUST SHOOTERS"

EXPERT'S VIEW ...

For a prediction of which "not just shooting" shooter will be the best in 1999, we asked the all-seeing Magic Eight Ball, and its answers can only be described as surprising.

PCXL: Will Max Payne be a breakout title this year?
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: Sources Say Yes
PCXL: How about Hired Guns?
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: Yes, Definitely
PCXL: Well, what about X-COM: Alliance?
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: My Reply Is No
PCXL: That's a little harsh, don't you think?
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: Ask Again Later
PCXL: I'm asking now, you idiot!
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: Better Not Tell You Now
PCXL: You better tell me now, understand!
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: Most Likely
PCXL: Good. Will our associate editor get a date this year?
MAGIC EIGHT BALL: My Reply Is No

AND THE REST ...

PREY
THE "KEANU REEVES" AWARD
Because we aren't banking on it (or him) coming out any time soon. If Prey ever does come out, it will be the first 3D engine from 3D Realms since the Build engine. That alone is reason to watch this game.

NAVY SEALS
THE "ISN'T THIS THAT AWFUL CHARLIE SHEEN MOVIE?" AWARD
Because of its unfortunate name. Unreal-based Sierra game is going for Rainbow Six, but this game is even more realistic with the help of a real Navy Seal.

KINGPIN
THE "MOST LIKELY TO USE A WORD THAT RHYMES WITH DUCK" AWARD
For its Joe Pesci–like dialogue, which is peppered with tasty profanities. The game also uses the Quake II engine and a unique conversation system that could result in the first true mob game ever. The blend of vile language, organized crime, and Quake II speed is a combination that PCXL can't wait to sink its rotting teeth into.

GOLD MEDAL

MAX PAYNE

THE "LITTLE DEVELOPER THAT COULD" AWARD
DEVELOPER → Remedy Entertainment/3D Realms
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
DUE → When it's done

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD → The small Finnish developer Remedy Entertainment manages to stuff more ATMOSPHERE into Max Payne than a dozen typical first-person shooters contain (of course, Max is a third-person game). While most games promise atmosphere and an involving story, few deliver a world you can believe in. Max Payne is set in a world as gritty and colorful as a Martin Scorsese mob film. With its amazingly sharp graphics engine, which boasts cool graffiti textures, moody lighting effects, and unbelievable smoke effects, Max Payne looks and plays like Goodfellas on speed.

The story adds extra atmosphere by tying the action levels together with dark comic-book characters. And while the story is intense, it isn't as intense as the action. Each level is large enough to let players choose their playing style, be it two-fisted action or stealth. The game looks and plays exactly as a gangster game should, not like the post-apocalyptic monster blaster we're growing so tired of. Perhaps.

SILVER MEDAL

HIRED GUNS

THE "TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM" AWARD
DEVELOPER → Devil's Thumb Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
DUE → May/June '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD → While first-person shooters are usually about looking out for Number One, Devil's Thumb is hoping players don't mind a bit of TEAM PLAY IN A SINGLE-PLAYER GAME. Hired Guns lets you control squads of soldiers, much like the surprise 1998 hit Rainbow Six. But unlike that game, it also lets you control your entire team of individuals from each person's viewpoint.

Your screen shows the viewpoint of your selected soldier, but it also shows, in small windows, the three viewpoints of your squad members. In some levels, you must take one guy to a corner of the level, and at the same time another member must be somewhere else. If it's done right, this will take you out of your linear methods of level solving and force you to use a little bit of team-play strategy. And that will be a welcome change indeed.

BRONZE MEDAL

X-COM: ALLIANCE

THE "REVAMPED FRANCHISE" AWARD
DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Microprose
DUE → Spring '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD → X-COM: Alliance continues the popular X-COM franchise that was dealt a staggering blow with Apocalypse, the disappointing last game in the series. However, Alliance MIXES TRADITION WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY, in the form of Unreal-based shooter action, but abandon the strategy tradition that made the X-COM series so popular. The mission-based action will be familiar to shooter fans, but the premission strategy will come as a bit of a shock. Arming each unit with the proper weapons and equipment is as crucial to success as sharp reflexes. Strategy and first-person action is a mix whose time is long overdue, and the franchise has fanatical support.

>>>TEAM-PLAY GAMES

QUAKE III ARENA

THE "REVOLUTIONARY GAME OF THE YEAR" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Id Software
PUBLISHER--> Activision
DUE--> When it's done

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> You might think that our calling *Quake III Arena* the most revolutionary game of the year this early is ludicrous, but bear with us for a moment. The game will be revolutionary simply because it's created by Id Software and **BECAUSE IT'S QUAKE.** No other game developer has so consistently pushed the boundaries of gaming technology, and no other company has John Carmack cranking out graphics and network code. Even if *Quake III Arena* is a bomb (if it is, the PCXL staff will run naked through the streets singing Michael Bolton songs), the entire PC game industry will be watching what happens

and trying to copy what it does right.

In case you have been under a rock for the past five months, we'll go over the *Quake III Arena* basics once again. **Unlike** previous *Quake* incarnations, *Quake III Arena* is geared almost exclusively toward multiplayer action. The single-player game is a tournament in which you progress through legions of deathmatch opponents in an effort to become the top-ranked player. Because of this focus, the multiplayer mode should be downright amazing.

Besides the considerable game-play revamp, *Quake III Arena* will boast a brand-new graphics engine. Early screens show amazing curved surfaces that look far less mechanical and far more organic than any shooter we have seen to date. Also the character models have been much improved to give players a far better and easier way to create their deathmatch counterparts. No matter what happens, no other title will have as many expectations of it as *Quake III Arena*, and no other title has as good a chance to live up to those expectations.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

THE "BOLD AMBUSH" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Epic Megagames
PUBLISHER--> GT Interactive
DUE--> March '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> *Unreal Tournament* is very similar in concept to *Quake III Arena*, but for one clear difference: **INTELLIGENT DEATHMATCH BOTS** (so intelligent that they refused to play PCXL's *Cone of Tragedy*). Using the same tournament style of gameplay as *Quake III Arena*, this title offers one feature that Id's pride and joy cannot — game-tested deathmatch bots. The original *Unreal* shipped with bots in the game, adding brilliant practice opponents for first-time deathmatchers (if only the Internet play had been so strong). The new game has bots that are far more advanced than the originals: They know what weapons work best for each situation and also know how to camp (doh!).

The bots are even programmed for team play, which is a significant part of *Unreal Tournament*. Epic has designed the game with clans in mind, creating missions that can only be solved by a team (either AI bots or real buddies). It also will introduce team-play modes like a D-Day invasion, a battle on a train, and numerous variations on capture-the-flag gameplay. Team play has grown up, and it's about to go mainstream.

TEAM FORTRESS

THE "TRIUMPHANT RETURN" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Valve Software
PUBLISHER--> Sierra
DUE--> March '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> *Team Fortress* has already revolutionized the gaming world, and this new version could push things even further by **FORCING YOU TO PLAY AS A TEAM.** At the start of every *Team Fortress* deathmatch, you choose the unit class you wish to be. Each of the classes has its own strengths, weaponry, and playing style. If you are selfish and go for a glory position when your team needs support players, you will lose. That forces players to work together, and also forces players to learn several positions.

Thanks to the popularity of *Half-Life*, *Team Fortress* will already have a base of fans before it hits shelves. And once it's online and people see how much more engrossing team play is than single-player deathmatch, *Team Fortress* will finally see the mainstream success the original *Quake* version deserved.

EXPERT'S VIEW ...

For a prediction of which team-play game will be the best in 1999, we unearthed the lost prophecies of Nostradamus.

In the year before the second millennium, the earth will move into a new age. A country named Canada will send bad comedians into the neighboring land, a nation called Iraq will threaten its neighbors, and the army of France will try to find another nation to surrender to. During the same year, a game called *Quake* will lead all others into a new generation of games, war will break out in a game called *Team Fortress*, and the fortunes of *Unreal Tournament* will rest on the forgiveness of Internet gamers.

AND THE REST ...

RAINBOW SIX: EAGLE WATCH
THE "BEST PLACE FOR A GOOD TK" AWARD
Of all the games we are looking forward to in 1999, few are as eagerly anticipated as *Eagle Watch* (and it's merely an add-on pack). Frankly, we got hooked on killing terrorists and, when the situation dictated it, a few of our own teammates. This expansion features five new missions set in real-world locations like the Taj Mahal, Big Ben, the U.S. Capitol, and the space shuttle. The missions are bigger and more interactive than those in the original version, and the nagging problems with multiplayer have been ironed out.

TRIBES
THE "DARK HORSE SURPRISE OF 1999" AWARD
Out of all the team-play games we have mentioned so far, none is as detailed or as complex as *Dynamix's Tribes*. This game, which is set in the *Starsiege* universe, was originally intended to be a support game for *Starsiege* itself. However, the game in its early form garnered a considerable shake of its own attention. When the final version of this title hits the Internet, a lot of people (those who don't read this magazine) are going to be very pleasantly surprised with the wide-open spaces, base attacking and defending, and careful weapon balance.

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YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO LEAD THE ROGUE SQUADRON IN COMBAT AGAINST THE EMPIRE.

HERE'S YOUR DRAFT CARD.

STAR WARS
ROGUE SQUADRON
3D

Your draft card? A 3D accelerator card, of course. It's the mandatory hardware necessary for you to enlist in a brand new, rapid-fire *Star Wars* air combat experience - **Rogue Squadron 3D**. Immerse yourself in the role of Luke Skywalker, leader of the Rebel Alliance's elite air corps, as you pilot a broad range of well-armed starfighters. From X-wings, Y-wings and A-wings to snowspeeders, you'll be able to unleash Rebel weaponry on the evil Empire in over 15 missions (day and night) - each spanning the vast *Star Wars* universe. Blast AT-ATs, TIE fighters, Imperial shuttles and more. Strap in, young Skywalker. It's the fight (and flight) of your life.

REQUIRES 3D ACCELERATOR

>>>REALTIME STRATEGY

GOLD MEDAL

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

THE "MOST-PLAYED RTS" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Westwood Studios
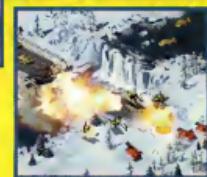**PUBLISHER-->** EA
DUE--> March '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> *Command & Conquer* is easily the most-copied realtime strategy game on the market today, and its first true sequel, *Tiberian Sun*, will likely be just as mimicked. The reason the sequel will be the most-played realtime strategy game of 1999 is that it takes the familiar gameplay of the C&C universe and sets it in a LIVING, BREATHING, 3D WORLD.

The 3D voxel terrain in *Tiberian Sun* can be deformed and outright destroyed by the effects of warfare. Forests can be set on fire, cliffs can be destroyed, and ice floes covered by tanks can be smashed to bits. During the game the environment will change (for example, rivers will freeze over during a match), and deadly ion storms, volcanoes, blizzards, and earthquakes will wipe out your idle forces.

The units that survive this environmental damage as well as regular battles will increase in rank and begin to command the units next to them. The harvesters are much smarter as well — no longer blindly driving into an enemy base to get a few extra monetary units. Also, gameplay issues like modular construction, construction-building cheats, and lack of support for multiple resolutions have been solved. It's these minor advancements, in conjunction with the major graphics enhancements and the continuing free matching service from Westwood, that make this the realtime strategy game to beat in 1999.

SILVER MEDAL

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

THE "DIEHARD FAN" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Cavedog
PUBLISHER--> GT Interactive
DUE--> Q2 '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> While *Tiberian Sun* will be the most-played realtime strategy of the year, *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms* will likely be the most fervently followed because of two things: ITS ATTENTION TO DETAIL and something known as BONEYARDS. The level of detail has always been a hallmark of the *Total Annihilation* series, and this new venture into *Warcraft*-like fantasy gaming is no exception. Players choose from not two, not three, but four distinct groups, each with its own strengths. The Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water forces each has a unique fighting style and game strategy.

Another feature that will ensure *Kingdom's* success is that it will have support out of the box for Cavedog's new Boneyards online service. *TA*'s position at the top of the RTS gaming tree was aided considerably by its multiplayer support. *Kingdoms* will be sat in the enviable position of being the only new high-fantasy RTS, and given the success of *Warcraft 2* (and the unlikely appearance of a sequel any time soon), will likely gain a massive following.

BRONZE MEDAL

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS

THE "NEW EMPIRE" AWARD
DEVELOPER--> Ensemble Studios
PUBLISHER--> Microsoft
DUE--> Spring '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> *Age of Empires* was a hit by anyone's estimation, selling more than a million units since its launch in 1997. But *Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings* could very well be even bigger because Ensemble is MAKING A DEEP GAME EVEN DEEPER. The strategy/warfare balance is one of the original *Age of Empire's* best features, and by adding depth to both of these gameplay concepts, *The Age of Kings* will offer more to the expert player.

The addition of garrisoning, military formations, and unit direction changes has beefed up combat, but it isn't always the best choice. Expanded trade and diplomacy options mean that players no longer are solely reliant on military aggression to keep their nation healthy and prosperous. Other improvements such as more diverse people groups, production queues, and improved navigation points will make an already enjoyable game easier to play. This series is well on its way to really becoming an empire of its own.
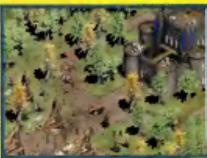
>>>ALTERNATIVE REAL-TIME STRATEGY

▌ GOLD MEDAL

HOMEWORLD

THE "EYE CANDY" AWARD

DEVELOPER--> Relic
PUBLISHER--> Sierra
DUE--> Spring '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> The word on *Homeworld* has been very quiet in the last few months as Sierra has focused its publicity force toward the launch of *Half-Life*. Now that *Half-Life* is in stores, we once again get to see bits and pieces of the game that manages to impress and shock us every time we see it. The reason is that **ITS BATTLES BELONG IN THE MIDDLE OF A SCI-FI BLOCKBUSTER.** Thanks to clever unit-for-

mation techniques and a simple but elegant control scheme, players can send enormous numbers of spaceships into battle and then zoom in and watch the action first hand.

At the core of *Homeworld* is a solid realtime strategy game complete with resource gathering and tech trees, but that core is surrounded by an impressive array of 3D ships and space stations. It's a hybrid that will work only as well as its control scheme, and judging by what we've played so far, it's only going to take a few minutes to work out. While the control is simple and intuitive, it belies an

amazing amount of detail in the strategy and combat areas.

It's difficult to get game journalists excited about titles we've seen before, but we look forward to checking out the new features Relic will attach to this already fine strategy game, when Sierra shows off the improved version early in the

▌ SILVER MEDAL

SHOGUN

THE "MOST IMPRESSIVE COMBAT" AWARD

DEVELOPER--> The Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER--> Electronic Arts
DUE--> Spring/summer '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> Do you want to get excited about *Shogun*? Then all you have to do is read this line and learn that the game features battles with literally **THOUSANDS OF WARRIORS ON THE SCREEN.** Set between 1467 and 1600, *Shogun* features warfare between storied warriors like the samurai and ninja, and the occasional geisha spy. Each of these units maintains scores for morale and experience, which change as the battle progresses.

This original idea also lets players build an empire in a turn-based mode and battle in a chaotic realtime mode. Watching formations of your soldiers rush into a battle against an equally strong enemy will absolutely blow your mind, but you won't even make it to the battle if you don't manage your empire well. Few titles have been this ambitious in recent years, and if Creative Assembly pulls this off, they will have a major hit on their hands.

▌ BRONZE MEDAL

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

THE "NEXT WEIRD THING" AWARD

DEVELOPER--> Planet Moon Studios
PUBLISHER--> Interplay
DUE--> Spring '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD--> *Giants* is one of the few games that combines great graphics, **BIZARRE HUMOR** and promising gameplay. The concept behind the game is simple: You are one of three forces battling to control mystical islands while fighting off enemies with the exact same goal. Either you are the giant monster Kabuto, the topless Sea Reaper, or the crack commando unit of Meccaryns.

Although the concept may be straightforward, the lighthearted nature of the game is decidedly twisted.

The key resource in the game, the trap-building Smarties, can be lured by a well-run pub (they're very similar to PCKL staffers). The more drunk they are, the more productive they are, and that's just the start of the weirdness. Be sure that the guys who created the bizarreness behind MDK will include plenty of strange things in *Giants*.

EXPERT'S VIEW ...

For a prediction of which realtime strategy game will be the best in 1999, we called celebrity psychic Jean Dixon.

PCKL: Hello, Jean, you ready to get started?

JEAN DIXON: Yes, Jennifer Love Hewitt will have an affair with Will Smith

PCKL: Interesting, but I want to talk about games

JEAN DIXON: Julia Roberts is playing games ... with Chris Farley's heart

PCKL: That doesn't make any sense; he's dead. We just want to know about *Homeworld*

JEAN DIXON: *Homeworld*? Well, in August of 1999 aliens are going to kidnap Burt and Loni and take them back to the Alien homeworld

PCKL: Again, no help. What about *Shogun* and *Giants*?

JEAN DIXON: Richard Chamberlain will star in a new miniseries next year, and Andre the Giant will retake the WWF wrestling crown

PCKL: First of all, Richard Chamberlain stars in a new miniseries every year, and second, Andre is dead. Do you have any predictions that work? Or that do not involve celebrities?

JEAN DIXON: No

PCKL: Goodbye

AND THE REST ...

BATTLEZONE 2
THE "GENRE'S LAST, BEST HOPE" AWARD
First-person realtime strategy genre hasn't caught on so far, and if it doesn't with *Battlezone 2*, it may never take off.

FLEET COMMAND
THE "SO REAL IT HURTS" AWARD
This World War II sim lets you control every aspect of your naval fleet. We say screw realism and bring on the Tesla coils!

BLACK AND WHITE
THE "IT'LL BE GOOD, BUT IT'LL BE LATE" AWARD
It's a Peter Molyneux game — what do you expect? You can also expect groundbreaking gameplay, poor sales, and industry awards.

DUNGEON KEEPER II
THE "IT'LL BE ON TIME, BUT WILL IT BE GOOD?" AWARD
It's no longer a Peter Molyneux game, but it looks to have added all the cool features left out of the first game.

>>>RPG/ACTION

AND THE REST ...

ANACHRONOX
THE "TROUBLED MIDDLE CHILD" AWARD

With all the troubles going on at Ion Storm (see X-tra), *Anachronox* lost key team members and is under severe pressure to perform. If *Daikotano* tanks, people will focus on this game to pull Romero and company's fat out of the fire. From what we've seen so far, *Anachronox* is one of the best-looking titles on the way this year — by a long stretch.

DEUS X
THE "SPOILED YOUNGEST CHILD" AWARD

Although it is an Ion Storm game like *Anachronox*, *Deus X* has been created far away from the troubled Dallas offices. At first this seemed like a disadvantage, but now the team is the only one at Ion Storm not crucially affected by the troubles.

The key to *Dues Ex* is going to be the revolutionary AI that Warren Spectre has promised. This kind of thing is hard to judge until the game is released, but Spectre's track record and commitment to the project give us a great deal of hope.

GOLD MEDAL

DIABLO II

THE "SURE THING" AWARD
DEVELOPER-> Blizzard
PUBLISHER-> Blizzard
DUE-> Sometime in '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD-> Blizzard's newest title is all but guaranteed to be a hit, considering the success of the company's last few games. Now would be the perfect time for Blizzard to release a minor update and ride out its past successes, but time after time the company has given us sequels that don't feel like expansions. *Diablo II* is no exception, and it will revolutionize the gaming world because **IT'S AS AMBITIOUS AS THE ORIGINAL**, title was.

Gameplay has been improved with five new classes: Amazon, Paladin, Necromancer, Barbarian, and Sorceress. The world is now four times as large; twice as many items are spread throughout it; and load times have been drastically reduced. Support for up to eight players, player-killing battle arenas, an improved barter system, and built-in clan support are significant multiplayer improvements, although none are as important as the better client/server security that promises to stop cheaters in their tracks.

Another massive improvement is 3Dfx support, which adds a bit of flair to the game's already impressive graphics. Those with 3Dfx cards will benefit from increased frame rates, transparencies, and other lighting effects, like smooth transitions from night to day.

With all these changes, *Diablo II* will be exciting for both the many gamers who've played the first one and for those who are looking for a bit of action in their RPG.

SILVER MEDAL

WHEEL OF TIME

THE "GORGEOUS DESIGN" AWARD
DEVELOPER-> Legend
PUBLISHER-> GT Interactive
DUE-> Spring/summer '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD-> When we first saw details of *Wheel of Time*, we greeted them with a great big yawn. Even though the game is based on a series of popular Robert Jordan novels and is powered by the *Unreal* engine, we still were a bit skeptical. However, after seeing this title's unique take on first-person shooters and its **USE OF REAL-WORLD ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**, we understand how it will revolutionize the gaming world in 1999.

Wheel of Time's gameplay is similar to that in *Dungeon Keeper*: You protect your fortress from an invading enemy by placing traps, assigning guards, and setting up sneak attacks. In multiplayer, up to four players can fight against each other, trying to break into opponents' castles and having their own breached. While the gameplay is fun, the best feature of this title is the use of real-world architectural design in each level. This goes a long way to toward making you feel as if you really were in the game's fantasy world. Look for more games to mimic this real-world style.

BRONZE MEDAL

EVERQUEST

THE "MORE ADDICTING THAN CRACK" AWARD
DEVELOPER-> 989 Studios
PUBLISHER-> 989 Studios
DUE-> Early '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD-> *Everquest* will change online RPGs because it shows that you don't have to have archaic graphics to have a massively multiplayer world. Its **3D ENGINE MAKES PLAYER INTERACTION MORE IMMERSIVE**. It also makes the game more intuitive to those who are more familiar with *Quake* than *Ultimo Online*. We have been resistant to online RPGs because of their high geek quotient, but *Everquest* is one of the first of these titles that you can play without being embarrassed.

With support for up to 1,000 players at a time, *Everquest* assures that you will always find some real-life companionship or competition. Playing against real people is significantly more involving than playing against computer opponents, and we like the opportunities to try out comedy routines on traveling wanderers. It's that kind of freedom that makes massively multiplayer games like *Everquest* so intriguing.

Go to **http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411**: Product Number 55

>>>ADVENTURE

▌GOLD MEDAL

DRAKAN

THE "LARA KILLER" AWARD
DEVELOPER–> Surreal Studios
PUBLISHER–> Psygnosis
DUE–> Early '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD–> Sometimes developers try to jump into an existing genre by aping the best-selling game. At first glance, you might think that *Drakan* does exactly that, but the game twists your misconceptions by TAKING AN EXISTING GENRE SOMEPLACE NEW. Sure, it includes plenty of *Tomb Raider*–style action, but that is supplanted by high-flying dragon-riding action.

The beauty of this game is that it lets you explore a world on foot and then jump on a dragon to see the world from an entirely different perspective. And thanks to the dragon's incredible firepower, it changes your perspective on your enemies as well. The giant trolls that caused you great fear early in the game are merely marshmallows to be toasted when you are on the back of your dragon.

You'll also want to ride your dragon just to see the lush world and strange new locales that the aptly named Surreal Studios has created. It's like a fantasy game that isn't tied down with all the boring fantasy stereotypes.

▌SILVER MEDAL

OUTCAST

THE "COOLEST ENVIRONMENTS" AWARD
DEVELOPER–> Appeal
PUBLISHER–> Infogrames
DUE–> Spring/summer '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD–> *Outcast* has a simple but powerful strategy of changing the gaming world: VOXEL WORLDS THAT DON'T SUCK. We've seen voxel environments in other games, but they have always been pixelated and ugly. *Outcast* fixes that problem and allows high-polygon characters to populate the world and to be incredibly detailed.

This title also proves that software-only games aren't dead. The special effects are amazing, the characters look great, and the bad guys are incredible. A midlevel dragon was easily one of the most impressive videogame creatures we have ever seen, and it was rendered sons 3D acceleration. If that doesn't get you excited, nothing will.

▌BRONZE MEDAL

MESSIAH

THE "INNOVATIVE BUT WAY TOO LATE" AWARD
DEVELOPER–> Shiny Entertainment
PUBLISHER–> Interplay
DUE–> Our guess: Q4 '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD–> *Messiah*'s realtime tessellation graphics engine will not be the feature that revolutionizes the gaming world. The technology took too long to get onto shelves, and unless a miracle occurs will not catch even a fraction of the developer interest afforded to the *Quake* and *Unreal* engines. What will revolutionize the gaming world, however, is *Messiah*'s unique style and more than a little DISTURBING GAMEPLAY.

You control an angel who accomplishes his heavenly goals by invading the bodies of your enemies. This means each character you meet is a potential weapon. It's doubtful that anyone will copy this distinct gameplay, but it will make other developers think about how they make games, and that ain't so bad.

30

Go to **http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411**: Product Number 51

>>>MECH GAMES

For a prediction of which mech game will be the best in 1999, we laid out screenshots of the biggest mech titles in a chicken coop in rural Tuolumne, Calif., and each chicken feed on each to see which one Billy the Prognosticating Pullet would choose.

The results were conclusive: Billy wasn't very hungry. In the past 13 weeks, Billy has picked 62% of all NFL games correctly and laid odds at the beginning of the year for New Orleans to win the Super Bowl, so we were certainly excited to see which game he was predicting to be the biggest.

After an excruciatingly long time, Billy chose Storsiege as the winner but also pooped on the screenshot. Even after much debate, we were not able to determine the meaning of the poop.

AND THE REST ...

HEAVY GEAR 2
THE "TOSS-UP" AWARD
The team that helped create the mech genre with *MechWarrior* and *MechWarrior 2* changed its focus to the *Heavy Gear* universe last year, and is hoping to rise again to prominence with the sequel.

The buggy last version disappointed hardcore *Heavy Gear* fans and soured a few *MechWarrior* fans who wanted a little more improvement. But the sequel should disappoint almost no one.

Heavy Gear 2 is created from the ground up with the new hardware-accelerated *Darkside* engine (which it shares with *Interstate 82*), and the game looks much better because of it. For instance, battles now take place in rich, varied environments such as rolling valleys, swamps, and even deep space.

The sound is considerably beefed up with the implementation of real 3D sound. The game also features a soundtrack by the people who wrote the music for TV's "Babylon 5," so expect a trade space opera or two.

Activision has put together a strong contender, and by the looks of things, *Heavy Gear 2* could be one of the biggest mech hits of the year.

🥇 GOLD MEDAL
MECHWARRIOR 3

THE "OLD NAME, NEW GAME" AWARD
DEVELOPER→ Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER→ Microprose
DUE→ Early summer '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD→ Since Zipper Interactive took over the *MechWarrior 3* project from FASA Interactive, the project has become far more impressive. The reason is that Zipper is approaching a fictional arsenal of weaponry as if a the company were making
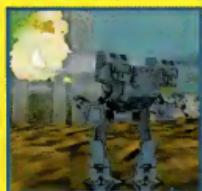
a sim. The simulation aspects include awesome REAL-WORLD EFFECTS like deformable terrain, destroyable buildings, and much-improved AI. The terrain and building effects become a major part of the game-play. Players can drop buildings on opponents and use craters for ambush position. Players can also hide their massive mechs underwater and destroy objects that get in their way. This kind of detail makes *MechWarrior 3* the most promising of all mech games in 1999.

While the *MechWarrior 3* worlds have been much improved, the AI has made a quantum leap over the last *MechWarrior* game from Activi-

sion. The AI is no longer scripted but rather individually programmed to each mech. These enemy units now follow their own internal guidelines for battle and survival and accomplish their own objectives. So what the advanced AI and real-world effects means for you is a more believable and more involving gaming experience than the current generation of mech games could even hope to provide.

🥈 SILVER MEDAL
SLAVE ZERO

THE "BIGGEST-LOOKING ROBOTS" AWARD
DEVELOPER→ Accolade
PUBLISHER→ Accolade
DUE→ Spring/summer '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD→ *Slave Zero* should turn some heads with its absolutely amazing SENSE OF SCALE. For the first time in a giant-robot game you actually feel like you are piloting a giant robot. You tower over buildings in an urban environment full of people and cars for you to toss around like little toys. It's this size difference that gives the game its scale and makes it look like a Japanese anime film.

Just because your robots are massive doesn't mean that they are slow, however. From the game's unusual (at least to mech games) third-person perspective, you can watch your mech deftly maneuver through city streets in the heat of battle, even strafing using jet packs. The combination of your unit's speed and the game's sense of scale make for a unique experience in the mech-game world.

🥉 BRONZE MEDAL
STARSIEGE

THE "OVERSHADOWED EXCELLENCE" AWARD
DEVELOPER→ Dynamix
PUBLISHER→ Sierra
DUE→ Q1 '99

HOW IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE GAMING WORLD→ *Starsiege* is in danger of being overshadowed by its dynamic team-play sister, *Tribes*, but in the mech world, *Starsiege* will revolutionize things because of its MULTIPLAYER FOCUS. Like other mech games, *Starsiege* has multiplayer modes, but unlike its competition, it also provides mid-capture the flag and other cool team-play events.

This focus goes right to the core of Dynamix's development philosophy, which puts a major emphasis on team play and multiplayer action in general. Add this team play to the complex sim of a mech game and you have a challenging but enjoyable title that will reach both the hardcore and new recruits.

PCXL PREDICTS

15 THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN IN 1999

- At least 16 games will be set in a post-apocalyptic future barely removed from our own time
- At least four more games will feature a heroine that looks suspiciously like the young Miss Croft
- Despite the proliferation of 3D accelerators, at least 32 civil war strategy games will debut with 2D graphics
- You will be able to join an online RPG, travel to far-off mythical lands, and still run across some geek talking about the next *Star Trek* movie
- You will play the *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* game, even if it sucks
- You will still spend at least 10% of your gaming time on solitaire and minesweeper
- Your computer still won't be fast enough to run *Madden 99* properly
- No computer on the market will be fast enough to run *Trespasser* properly
- *PCXL* will publish at least one picture of a scantily clad coed
- *Deer Hunter III* will outsell *Deer Hunter*, *Deer Hunter II*, and every other game on the market
- You will have to listen to some joker do the Hudson routine every time you play *Alien vs. Predator*
- You will be killed at least once by a teammate in *Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch*
- Some company will still market its game as "extreme"
- Ion Storm will ship a game late (if it ships a game at all)
- *Tomb Raider IV* will look suspiciously like *Tomb Raider III*

15 THINGS THAT WON'T HAPPEN IN 1999

- EA will release fewer than three *FIFA* titles
- Dave Perry will announce that he is no longer talking to the media
- Hexagon-grid turn-based strategy games will no longer be made
- The 3D acceleration market will slow down long enough for you to catch up
- The PGL card for *Immortal* will actually climb in value
- *Diablo II* will release on its expected date
- Barbie games will sell fewer copies than *Quake III Arena*
- Someone will release a first-person shooter controller that actually works
- Your PC will be fast enough for the entire year
- *PCXL* will write the definitive "Teen Digital Diva" strategy guide
- There will be no games that look suspiciously like *Command & Conquer*
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TEEN

[AND YOU THOUGHT FLIGHT SIMS WERE BORING?]

AIR WARS

I T WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN EVENTUALLY: A PCXL STAFFER ACTUALLY DUSTED OFF ONE OF THE MANY NEW COMBAT FLIGHT SIMS AROUND THE OFFICE — NO DOUBT MISTAKING IT FOR THE LATEST *QUAKE* KILLER. AND ALTHOUGH WE WERE EXPECTING MAMMOTH MANUALS, LINE-DRAWN AIRCRAFT, DIALS, RADARS, AND ALL MANNER OF CONFUSING TECHNICAL JIGGERY-POKERY, WE FOUND ASTOUNDING 3D-ACCELERATED GRAPHICS WITH GORGEOUS EXPLOSIONS IN FLAK AND BULLET-STREAKED SKIES.

We climbed into the cockpits of dozens of warplanes, only to crash and burn time and again. But we're used to this from our nightly bar excursions, so frequent failure didn't deter us. The latest trend in combat flight sims is clearly to set them in World War II and World War I, a time when combat in the air was as intimate an affair as a knife fight. Kills are up close and personal. Who knows, maybe you'll soon be like us, wearing an authentic bomber jacket and scarf (hey, we heard pilots get chicks!) and saying things like "Check six, matey!" or hearing "Bandits! Bandits! Bandits!" in your sleep.

Special note: *Scores are given to the finished games for overall rating and action quotient. In all cases 10 is the best and 1 is the worst. Therefore, an overall rating of 4 and an action quotient score of 8 means that the game sucks but the sucky action is easy to get into. Got it? Good.*

INFORMATION BY STEVE KLETT
Fluff by PCXL staff

Classic (albeit really cheesy) *Top Gun* lines: #1—> "I feel the need, the need for speed"

Jane's WWII Fighters

DEVELOPER → Jane's
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
WEBSITE → www.janes.a.com
PRICE → $50
API SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide

We didn't let Jane's reputation for seriously serious sims, such as *Longbow 2*, deter us from checking out *WWII Fighters*. For graphics pleasure alone, this sim is worth owning — particularly if you own a high-end PC. (You'll want a PII 300 with at least 64MB RAM, and an AGP card or one, preferably two, Voodoo 2 boards. If you've less than a P200, 32MB RAM, and a Voodoo card, forget it.)

This is the one sim of the bunch that goes so far as to try to model transparent 3D clouds — and they sure are something to behold! *[Editor's note: Is there any excuse for going gooey over 3D clouds?]* Moonlight and sunlight gleam off of the planes' aluminum frames, and each of the control surfaces that would move on the real thing moves on these planes. And the

explosions and flak (anti-aircraft fire that bursts in the air around you) are an awesome experience. Pilots scream over the radio as their planes get riddled with bullets. Add the extremely challenging (and configurable) AI, and *WWII Fighters* is an exceptionally well-rounded combat test.

You can take part in a campaign set in the Ardennes in 1944 — better known as the Battle of the Bulge — from both the Allied and Axis perspective, create your own missions with the mission editor, or use the Quick Mission option to jump into a dogfight as quickly as possible. *WWII Fighters* has seven planes to fly, including the American P-51 (better known as the Mustang) and P-38, the German FW190 Focke Wulf and ME262 (the only jet to appear in combat in World War II), and the British Spitfire. Eight-player multiplay over LAN and Internet (with Jane's free matchmaking service) are the icing on the cake.

You should be aware, however,

that *WWII Fighters*' focus on realism means it will take some time to get proficient (even on the lower skill settings), and its interface and campaign modes are rather bland.

Summary: The top realistic World War II sim of the moment
It's Like Quake II
Except: It takes place in the air, kills are too infrequent, and camping in the air is impossible
Rating: 9
Learning Curve: Difficult
Action Quotient: 7
Resource Hog: High-end

WWII Fighters leaves out few details — look closely and you'll see bullet casings being ejected as this P-38 fires.

European Air War

DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Microprose
WEBSITE → www.microprose.com
PRICE → $40
API SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide

European Air War took a long time to come out: It's the successor to Microprose's excellent 1942: *The Pacific Air War*, which debuted in '91. It's not as technically polished or flashy as *WWII Fighters* in its graphics, or as realistic, but it just may be more fun.

In addition to deathmatch and cooperative LAN and Internet play, *EAW* lets you fly 20 different American, British, and German aircraft in three campaigns — two set in the European theater and one in the Battle of Britain. Planes include all those that are found in *WWII Fighters*, as well as the British Typhoon and German BF-110. Even at its highest settings, I found *EAW*'s flight model to be the most forgiving (which is good for those of us used to the simple, precise handling of games like *Half-Life*), and air battles can fea-

ture as many as 250 planes. *EAW* strikes perhaps the best balance between realism and fun. It also attempts to capture the feel of World War II more than any other sim listed here, with authentic period music and art.

Summary: Perhaps the most fun World War II sim of the moment
It's Like Quake II
Except: Deathmatch doesn't involve the words *gib*, *frag*, or *rocket jump*. The closest any of the flight sims get to *Quake* speed and style, but still a ways off
Rating: 8
Learning Curve: Easy
Action Quotient: 9
Resource Hog: Low-end

Damn! That's a lotta airplanes to shoot down! How did the Brits do it?

[PREPARED FOR DISASTER]

The airlines have tried to prepare for the occasional plane crash with huge insurance policies, floatable seat cushions, and the always valuable black box. However, we think that rather than trying to help you survive a crash (which is nearly impossible), the airlines should stock a few simple items to make sure your last moments can be enjoyed.

RED M&M'S → We know they cause cancer, but what the hell
UNEDITED PORN → Lotion samplers and acting out each scene would be a big bonus
REALLY GOOD DRUGS → You won't even realize you are going to die
ON-STAFF HOOKERS (OR REALLY LOOSE STEWARDESSES) → If the plane is going down, shouldn't I be crew?
BOTTLES OF HEMLOCK → Maybe you can't bear the wait

Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator
WWII Europe Series

DEVELOPER → Microsoft
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
WEB SITE → www.microsoft.com
PRICE → $40
API SUPPORT → Direct3D

Well, you knew it had to happen someday — the *MS Flight Sim* series branching into combat, that is. And sure, it's yet another World War II sim set in Europe with eight planes to fly (again, more or less the same as those found in *WWII Fighters*, with one additional BF-109 variant), two campaigns, various historical and quick combat missions, and LAN and Internet play. But it's surprisingly good.

Graphically it's right up there with *WWII Fighters*, except for the special effects. Planes look terrific, particularly the cockpits, but they don't blow up so well. Still, the ability to import planes from *MS Flight Sim* and shoot down 747s is a definite plus. And the biggest European cities — London, Berlin, and Paris — are modeled in extreme detail. I'd rank the flight model in between *WWII Fighters'* and *EAW's* in terms of difficulty, but it's also the most sluggish. Dogfights are much slower here than they are in the other sims; they may be more realistic (or not — I wasn't there), but they're not as exhilarating.

Already, a mission editor has been released, and *Combat Flight Sim* looks to be getting a great deal of backing from the Microsoft marketing bandwagon.

Summary: Much more than Cessnas with guns
It's Like *Quake II*
Except: it'll sell about a million more copies
Rating: 6
Learning Curve: Steep
Action Quotient: 4
Resource Hog: Midrange

Taking on three B-17s by yourself is sure suicide.

See? We told you.

Red Baron 3-D

DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
WEBSITE → www.sierra.com/dyn/mix
PRICE → $40
API SUPPORT → Glide

If World War II action ain't your cup of tea, how about strapping on a bit of wood and canvas and taking to the skies in World War I? Here the combat is even more up close and personal. You'll often hear enemy pilots grunt as your bullets tear into their cockpits, and your own aircraft creak and groan as you fly — not the most comforting sound.

Red Baron 3-D should really be called *Red Baron III: The Apology*. It's an update to the abysmal initial release of *Red Baron II* last year, which in turn was the sequel to one of the most popular flight sims ever.

You get 3Dfx graphics support, 64-player Internet games over the WON network, better flight models and cockpit graphics for the 22 aircraft, and the chance to hunt down and kill the Red Baron himself. There's also a dynamic campaign system that rewards those who put the time into it, instant action, and historical missions. Although *Red Baron 3-D* is much, much better than *Red Boron II*, I still prefer Empire Interactive's older *Flying Corps Gold* as top choice for a World War I sim.

Summary: Better late than never
It's Like *Quake II*
Except: Strafing is actually a realistic feature of the game
Rating: 6
Learning Curve: Average
Action Quotient: 6
Resource Hog: Midrange

What was that snapping sound? Oh well, I won't worry about it. ...

[GAMES WE WANT]

Sure, some of these air combat games aren't half bad, but at *PCXL* we want a different experience. These are a couple of flight-based games that would really pique our interest.

LA BOMBA → You are the pilot on the flight carrying '60s rocker Richie Valens, and no matter what the plane is going down — but you get to drop Valens onto unsuspecting third world countries. Hit the right locations and some good will come of this tragedy

NORTHWEST PILOTS: SCREAMIN' DRUNK OVER AMERICA → Fly passengers to vacation getaways, family reunions, and sick grandmothers while completely trashed. Three levels (Buzzed, Drunk, Trashed) accurately capture the blurry eyesight, horny urges, and slowed reflexes. Land successfully and it's straight to the pilots' club for another round

Fighter Squadron:

Screamin' Demons Over Europe

DEVELOPER →	Parsoft Interactive
PUBLISHER →	Activision
WEBSITE →	www.activision.com
PRICE →	$50
API SUPPORT →	Direct3D, Glide
AVAILABLE →	Now

Fighter Squadron is yet another realistic simulation set in Europe. At press time, it was entering late alpha stage, so we were unable to rate it.

Ten aircraft are available, mostly the same standard fare you can fly in the others, with one exception — you can pilot a big-ass bomber! *Fighter Squadron* lets you take four multi-engine aircraft — the B-17, Ju-88A4, and the British Mosquito and Lancaster — into the wild, mostly bluish yonder. Better still, a hot-switching feature allows you to jump from position to position in the bombers — pilot to gunner, for

Screamin' Demons lets you switch positions during flight. Pictured here is the bombardier position in a B-17.

example — in the middle of a dog-fight (you can even jump among single-seat fighters). There's nothing like jumping into the tail of a B-17 under heavy fire from enemy planes and flak, dealin' some death with a 50-caliber machine-gun, and screamin' (it is the name

of the game) things like "Eat lead, bandits!" In addition to full multi-player support, the sim has three campaigns set in the English Channel, North Africa, and Germany, providing some 90 detailed missions altogether.

Based on a superrealistic

physics engine — every object in the game reacts according to its own physics model, so bullets drift in the wind and pieces of planes rip off when they take damage — *Fighter Squadron* may present the most realistic feel of flying a World War II aircraft. Realism aside (we really don't care about that shit), the best part of this game is the endless variety and pure brutality of the crashes. With a full-featured mission editor and an arcade mode for novice flyers, this sim may have it all.

Luftwaffe Commander

DEVELOPER →	SSI
PUBLISHER →	SSI
WEBSITE →	www.ssionline.com
PRICE →	$40
API SUPPORT →	Direct3D, Glide
AVAILABLE →	Q1 '99

Finally, something different! *Luftwaffe Commander* is designed to let you re-create the experiences of a German fighter pilot during World War II. Flyin' as the cabbage-eating krauts — now that's more like it!

Your career will span five theaters of war, starting with Spain and culminating in the defense of Berlin. You'll start out flying a

biplane, then various versions of the BF-109, and finally the ME 262 jet over Berlin.

Luftwaffe Commander will offer 50 single-player missions, and 20 multiplayer missions for up to 10 pilots over LAN and Internet. Two flight models — hyperrealistic and basic — should make the game appeal to novice and veteran players alike. The advancing career mode and German perspective should provide a unique flying experience. No news on whether a cyber Hitler will lead you through tutorials, but PCXL is officially in favor.

Even if you fight well as the Germans in Luftwaffe Commander, you can't alter the outcome of the war. Your fate is ultimately sealed.

Nations: WWII Fighter Command

DEVELOPER →	Psygnosis
PUBLISHER →	Psygnosis
WEBSITE →	www.psygnosis.com
PRICE →	TBD
API SUPPORT →	Direct3D, Glide
AVAILABLE →	March '99

Rounding out the World War II sims in the "to come" category is *Nations: Fighter Command*, which lets you fly 12 different aircraft in three 15-mission campaigns for

the Germans, Americans, and British (there will also be 10 instant action and three multiplayer missions). Nations should be a feast for the eyes,

featuring dynamic weather effects, highly detailed texture-mapped aircraft, and terrain maps of Europe. Period film footage is being used to link the missions and to put them in the right historical context for each battling nation.

The beauty will come at a steep hardware price: The developers recommend a PII 300, 64MB RAM, and an AGP card — but hey, at least they're honest.

Warbirds
Version 2.01

DEVELOPER → iMagic Online
PUBLISHER → iMagic Online
WEBSITE → www.igames.com
PRICE → $2/hour, software is free
API SUPPORT → Direct3D

How about pitting your flying skills against up to 200 other real human opponents, with little or no lag over an ordinary 28.8 Kbps modem connection? (Can Quake offer that? I think not.) Warbirds lets you do it all in any of 50 different airplanes, including fighters and bombers, and multiple people can fly in a single aircraft as pilot and gunners. You choose to fly for one of four countries — Red, Gold, Purple, and Green — and the simple goal is help your country capture enemy airfields.

Version 2.01 is the latest update for the online-only sim, and a major new feature is D3D support for graphic accelerators. You now get special effects like muzzle flare when you fire your guns, external damage on aircraft, and more-detailed terrain. The drawback is that it costs $2 an hour — and it takes some time to learn, so be prepared for an investment. But it's worth it because there's quite a community behind the game, and at least a hundred people are always on the server.

Other online sims worth checking out include the oldest, Kesmai's Air Warrior (www.airwarrior.com, $9.95/month); and Microsoft's Fighter Ace (www.zone.com, $1.95/hour). Even with added 3D support, Air Warrior is the most complex and dated-looking of the three, but many still prefer it for realism. Fighter Ace is the newest, and its focus is on action, action over any kind of realism. For my gaming dollar, Warbirds offers the best blend of variety, action, and realism.

Summary: It's the current king of the online combat flight sims

You'll only be able to fly the ME262 in a Warbirds scenario, but ain't it purty?

Fighter Pilot: Ready, Aim, Fire

Fighter Pilot is an action-oriented game designed for lower-end machines and people with little or no flight sim experience. Hell, you don't even need a joystick to fly this puppy; the keyboard will suffice.

You embark on a series of generic missions in one of four aircraft — the F-18, F-22, F-117, or Russian Su-35 — and your goal is to destroy, destroy, destroy! There's multiplayer support for up to eight pilots over LAN, modem or internet connection. Controls couldn't be simpler. You pretty much just need to point your plane at the target and fire. Occasionally you'll need to dodge a missile and drop a decoy flare or two, but the game's greatest challenge is enduring the incredibly lame in-flight music and

cheesy pilot briefings. The graphics and explosions are average at best, compared with those of the other games here. It has a definite affinity to the arcade classic *Afterburner*. But *Fighter Pilot*'s biggest claim to fame is probably its price: $20. You can't expect too much for that, and, in fact, you don't get too much.

But if you're absolutely terrified of flight sims and want to jump in a plane and blow stuff up, *Fighter Pilot* may be for you. If you're more multiplayer, watching *Top Gun* again and then jumping in a game like *WWII Fighters*, cranking down the realism, and blowing stuff up in more style.

Summary: The *Deer Hunter* of combat flight sims
It's Like Quake II
Except: It's not nearly as much fun in any regard
Rating: 3
Learning Curve: Brain-dead
Action Quotient: 9
Resource Hog: 486 is fine

Blowing stuff up is what this game's all about.

Top Gun: Hornet's Nest

** PREVIEW

Like the movie upon which it's based, *Top Gun: Hornet's Nest* focuses on action, presented in full Hollywood style. You get flashy graphics, in-your-face sound effects, a rock soundtrack, and full-motion video briefings, presented by actor James Tolkan in the role of your commanding officer, Hondo. (Tolkan played Hondo in the movie, as well as the first *Top Gun: Fire at Will* game from Microprose. Thank god for games, eh James?) You, of course, play the part of the hotshot pilot Maverick for 30 short but action-packed missions in three different campaign theaters. This time, you're flying an F/A-18 instead of the F-14 Tomcat. Up to eight players can dogfight over a LAN, Internet (featured on the MSN Gaming Zone), or modem connection.

Hornet's Nest is designed from the ground up to look and feel as much like the movie as possible (thankfully, the volleyball play by greased-up, shirtless men is omitted), forsaking any regard for realistic flight dynamics or radar systems. And our preview build indicates that the game should

Time to kick some ass in the desert.

Hey Maverick, your father couldn't fly worth beans!

pretty much succeed in capturing the mood of its film counterpart. You don't have to wait long to get into the thick of things, the graphics are above average, and the in-flight chatter emulates the movie nicely.

But have you ever noticed how sometimes a movie you thought was great a few years ago seems

cheesy now? *Hornet's Nest* reflects *Top Gun*'s datedness. And there's no hot blonde hanging around to make you forget the cheese, either.

Still, *Hornet's Nest* is incredibly user-friendly, and perhaps a better alternative than *Fighter Pilot* for those looking for lighter fare in a flight sim.

SPEED KILLS.

ATI RAGE FURY. So fast, you won't know what hit you.

GRAPHICS BY rage 128

ATI RAGE FURY

- True 128-bit 3D and 2D graphics engine

- A massive 32MB of memory for realistic 3D gameplay, life-like textures and resolutions up to 1920x1200

- Experience 3D game action with true color performance at 1024x768

- Integrated hardware DVD for incredible video playback

- Designed for DirectX 5.0/6.0 and OpenGL with full ICD

- Supports TV-out for big screen gaming and ATI-TV Wonder the add-on TV tuner that turns your PC into a TV

RAGE FURY

For RAGE FURY'S latest 3D performance scores check out www.atitech.com

The New Breed of Speed.

ATI

Logitech WingMan Formula Force

Get a grip on it, you're holding the best

PRICE→	$129 SRP
INTERFACE→	USB, serial
API SUPPORT→	DirectX 5.0, i-Force 2.0
BUNDLE→	None
PROGRAMMABLE→	Yes

It's rare that one product stands out as far above its competition as Logitech's WingMan Formula Force steering wheel. Before this product hit shelves, PC game racers had to choose among several steering wheels, each with its own strengths, and each with a distinct weakness. The Microsoft force feedback wheel has great pedals and a good feel, but it suffers from a sloppy dead zone that hampers control. Act Lab's steering wheel is sturdy and its pedals are awesome, but it takes up almost half the desk without a solid latching mechanism. Other wheels followed suit, until now.

The WingMan Formula Force has so few chinks in its armor that it almost feels bad to point the few flaws out, but let's get them out of the way. The foot pedals are some of the best we've used, but if they were bigger they would have been more realistic and, as a result, more intuitive. Also, the wheel could have used a few more buttons — even two more would have been an improvement over the current four-button setup. We can think of no other gripes.

So what does the Formula Force get right? Starting with the wheel

unit, this device is put together like an Italian sports car. The grip is solid, heavy, and easy to hold — it never feels cheap. Better yet, the base of the wheel takes up the smallest footprint of any of our testing wheels, so you won't have to clear your entire desk just to play a racing game. It also has one of the best locking mechanisms of any wheel we tested, holding steady even in the most harried driving conditions.

While the actual pedals feel a little small, the pedal base is near perfect. It's large, flat, and heavy enough not to twist and move when you are frantically driving (or even when you are drinking and driving, as we were). Also, the wires are long enough to stretch out of the way when you are playing. This may seem like a small detail, but many steering wheels we've tested have wires that get in the way during the action.

The Formula Force supports USB — so if you've upgraded to Win98, you'll have this faster digital throughput. Win95 users will have to make do with the standard serial connection. The Logitech profiler software is wonderfully simple and lets you set up controls for your favorite games quickly and easily. Several games (Interstate 76, TOCA Touring Car, Motorhead, and a slew of others) are already programmed into the controller, enabling you to set up your

The Formula Force is the new steering wheel standard.

control scheme before you ever start the game.

Once you are in the game, you'll be amazed by the smooth feedback. Logitech's wire-driven mechanism means you will find none of the dead zone that plagued devices like the Microsoft wheel, with its clunky gear-driven mechanism. In a game that really uses force feedback effectively (Carmageddon 2, for example) you'll notice the subtle responses as well as the not-so-subtle wrist-snapping ones.

It's this all-around strength that makes the WingMan Formula Force the hands-down best steering wheel on the market. And priced at around the $100 dollar mark, it's an essential add-on for any racing fan. ➨

TOUR DE FORCE

THE BEST GAMES FOR FORCE FEEDBACK

CARMAGEDDON 2
PUBLISHER → Interplay
Forget power effects, occasional bumper taps and a rumbling engine — Carmageddon 2 lets you know what it feels like to run over a penguin, a yuppie skier, and an elephant. Frankly, we think that's very cool.

NEED FOR SPEED III
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
The driving engine in this game is excellent, and force feedback adds even more realism to an already enjoyable racer. This is one of the few games in which force feedback actually adds to the strategy and gameplay.

POWERSLIDE
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
This dune buggy racer works great with force feedback because it's all off road and you're continually feeling the resulting effects.

THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE FEEDBACK

When you feel your force feedback steering wheel bump in your hands, what you are really experiencing is a careful re-creation of a real event. Developers program their games to include feedback by assigning wave patterns to each action, and the steering wheel reads those patterns and turns them into feedback. Here is a little primer on how the forces look before you feel them.

GRAVEL ROAD	～～～～～～～
SPEED BUMP	⌒⌒⌒⌒
DRIVING OVER KATE MOSS	～⌒～⌒～
DRIVING PAMELA & TOMMY LEE'S LIMO	∿∿∿∿∿∿
DRIVING OVER ANNA NICOLE SMITH	⌣⌣
RIDING IN A CAR WITH JACK KEVORKIAN	⌒‾‾

RATING 9

➕ Pluses

- Solid feel
- Small footprint
- Excellent software

Minuses ➖

- Small pedals
- Only four buttons
- Not much else

45

Don't get mad at us — we're not the guys who make the technology advance so fast that the new Voodoo 2 board you just bought will soon be outdated. By the end of March, the next generation of 3D chipsets will be headed to stores, and the board you have in your system will cease to be the cutting edge.

Even though you know your TNT, Voodoo 2, or G200 will play games as fast as you need, the voice of new technology is always calling. But before you rip out your 16MB TNT or dual–Voodoo 2 configuration, here's a little preview of what's coming up in the first half of 1999. And to kick it off, a short explanation of what technology is giving birth to the new generation of chipsets.

THE NEW REVOLUTION

What spawned this new generation of 3D chipsets? Something as simple as smaller silicon wafers making up the chips. Until now, most 3D accelerators were built with .35-micron circuitry, but a new standard has been set at .25 microns.

The smaller the circuitry, the less energy is needed to run the chip. Because less energy is needed, the heat is lower, which in turn means that clock speeds can be set faster without causing the chips to overheat. This new standard will at first be used in existing .35-micron base chipsets, and will provide between 10% and 25% speed increases over the current hardware. Here is the new batch of .25-micron cards:

S3 SAVAGE 3D2

The Savage 3D was one of the first .25-micron chipsets on the market, and hasn't performed well in terms of sales for S3. The problems with this board can be linked to its low limit of card memory (a maximum of 8MB) and the unfortunate timing of its release after Riva's TNT and Matrox's G200.

S3 is hoping to make a bigger splash with its next generation of chipsets due near the end of Q1 '99. The board promises to fix the original Savage 3D's 8MB RAM restriction, boost the clock speed, and even enhance the chipset's texture-compression routine. The board will probably sell for less than the original, and S3 will push hard to get it into OEM motherboards, which means the Savage 3D2 chipset will be highly visible. **ODDS OF BREAKING OUT AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER →** Low, but it could gather some important ground against ATI in the OEM market.

ATI RAGE 128GL

Few other chipsets were as hyped or anticipated at this year's Comdex computer convention as the Rage 128GL (it's the card John Carmack has been mentioning in his comments about top video card performance for *Quake III*). This board is comparable to the TNT or a single Voodoo 2, which means it isn't quite up to snuff with the forthcoming next generation. However, the board does have some impressive all-around features.

The Rage 128GL features a hardware DVD/MPEG2 decoder, and ATI is selling this card to OEMs at a price below the Riva TNT's $48. The boards should be in stores by the time you read this, but as the story goes to press we are hearing reports of overheating on the 128GL, which could be a serious problem that could conceivably cause delays. **ODDS OF BREAKING OUT AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER →** Not much as an add-on card, but ATI still dominates the OEM market and doesn't want to lose it to companies such as S3, 3Dfx, or Nvidia.

NEC POWERVR SERIES 2

This chipset was one of the most anticipated at the beginning of 1998, but PowerVR turned its attentions to the Sega Dreamcast, and its PC plans were put on hold for a while. Now the Dreamcast is completed, and PowerVR is ready to take on the PC competition full force.

The PowerVR Series 2 chipset was originally designed as a .35-micron chipset with a 66MHz core speed, but by the time the board hit Comdex, it had evolved into a .25-micron chipset that boasted an impressive 100MHz to 125MHz core speed.

Although the company has been extremely tight-lipped about its product, the chipset enjoys some significant benefits from its placement in the Dreamcast. Because many developers are already planning games for Sega's new console, it is logical that many will be creating both Dreamcast and PC versions that take advantage of the PowerVR Series 2 technology. The company expects the 2D/3D board to be in stores by the end of Q1 '99. **ODDS OF BREAKING OUT AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER →** Low, but as the Dreamcast prospers, so will the PowerVR Series 2.

MATROX G300

Matrox made a lot of noise last year when it debuted the G200 board, which produced excellent image quality. This year, the company takes that chipset's basic design and is pushing it to stay competitive with the likes of the new generation of Nvidia and 3Dfx chipsets. A die-shrink (down to the coming .25-micron standard) and the clock speed increase that goes with it are rumored to be in the works. **ODDS OF BREAKING OUT AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER →** Growing; Matrox created an impressive card last year, and if it keeps pressing could push the competition this year.

NVIDIA TNT2 & VANTA

The TNT was clearly one of the biggest hits of last year, and Nvidia has no intentions of resting on its laurels this year. First up is the Nvidia TNT2 that the company is saying little about. However, we do know that Nvidia shares the same manufacturing plant with 3Dfx, so it will probably be going to a .25-micron chipset. This would enable the company to greatly increase the clock speed of its TNT card while maintaining the card's

impressive image quality and high color rendering. It's likely that the board will be in stores as early as the end of Q1 '99.

On the OEM side, Nvidia is shopping a new chipset known as the Vanta to business computer manufacturers. The Vanta is basically a TNT chip with a .25-micron die-shrink. The performance increase is around 10 or 20%, but the smaller chip size means lower production costs and cheaper OEM chips, giving manufacturers yet another cheap 3D chipset to choose from. **ODDS OF BREAKING OUT AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER →** Excellent, but it needs to keep pushing 3Dfx if it wants to come out on top.

3DFX VOODOO 3

ODDS OF BREAKING OUT AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER → Already on top, and by the looks of the Voodoo 3, the company will be hard to beat.   ➤

PRICE BREAKERS

One thing 3D card manufacturers have learned is that overpricing their cards severely limits mass production into the market. Therefore, all these chipsets should cost no more than $149 each; that is the amount most pundits believe to be "mass market." At this price, apparently, your unit is something you can do once a year. Below is a list of other things you could do with that $150. The choice is yours.

- Buy a Sony PlayStation
- Buy a Nintendo 64
- Buy 16 Sega Saturns
- Buy a bottle of Dom Perignon
- Buy one share of Microsoft stock
- Buy 50 happy meals
- Get four "massages" in bad part of town
- Open 4 Starbucks
- Buy 225 small bags of Funyons
- Buy a Mark McGwire rookie card
- Talk to naughty college coeds for 50 minutes
- Buy three games (which would look much better if you had a Voodoo 3)
- Buy 15 large pizzas from Domino's
- Buy 30 large pizzas from Little Caesar's
- Play 18 holes of golf at Silverado Country Club
- Play 360 holes of golf at the Tuolumne, Calif, public golf course
- Buy one Rose Bowl ticket
- Get 150 useless items at a 99 cent store

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Designed by ALIENWARE — *PC Gamer, January 1998*

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–BOOT Magazine, July 1998

"PERFORMANCE WAS SIMPLY STUNNING"

–Computer Gaming World, July 1998

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Voodoo 3

For gamers, the highlight of Comdex '98 was undoubtedly 3Dfx Interactive's "big and bouncy" 16MB Voodoo 3 2D/3D 128-bit next-generation chip announcement, made at an invitation-only press event at Steven Spielberg's Dive Restaurant. The coffee was nice too.

While the Voodoo 3 offers no real additions in terms of advanced 3D features, the triangles-per-second rendering capabilities have significantly increased over those of the Voodoo 2 (which basically means it has few new features, but a lot more power). Unlike the Banshee, the Voodoo 3 chip is .25 micron, instead of .35, permitting an increase in clock speed and therefore a higher rendering capability. The fill rate has also been upped due to the second TMU (texture memory unit), which lets games render complex multitexture lighting effects in a single pass through the processing unit. Speed is certainly of the essence, and a single pass for multitexturing is the way to get it. In fact, Voodoo 3 literally doubles the fill rate, making it on par with or better than a Voodoo 2 SLI setup on a single board. It will also

feature impressive 2D acceleration, DVD support, digital video output, and digital LCD support for flat-screen monitors.

As LCD monitor prices continue to plummet toward mass-market appeal, the number of gamers that will use them will greatly increase. 3Dfx has patented its LCDfx feature, which enables these monitors to use the chipset, and is on the forefront of the technology. Other companies, such as PowerVR, are also supporting LCD monitors, but the Voodoo 3 should hit stores first.

3Dfx will release two versions of the Voodoo 3 sometime in the first quarter of '99. The higher-end Voodoo 3 3000 will be aimed at gamers, whereas the Voodoo 3 2000 is pitched toward OEM manufacturers. The 3000 will have a maximum graphics clock speed of 183MHz, compared with the 2000's 125MHz.

Because of this difference, you can expect the fill rates and rendering capabilities to differ substantially. The fill rate of the 3000 will be faster at 366 megatexels per second (the term megatexels is based upon a texel, a bilinear textured pixel), whereas the 2000 will do 250 megatexels per second. The 3000 will render 7 million triangles per second, and the 2000 will render 4 million. Expect OEM boards (the 2000 series) to hit stores sometime in the late spring or early summer of '99.

The Voodoo 3 I saw — which was .25 micron clocked at 160MHz, not the final 183MHz — was out of fabrication three days prior to the show. Scott Sellers, 3Dfx co-founder (and VP of something important), told me that it took all of three hours to have Quake II up and running. Nevertheless, together with Dennis "Thresh" Fong, we locked the door and did some serious benchmarking for a

couple of hours. The results left us pretty impressed, and there were absolutely no crashes.

Apart from the high-resolution 1152 x 864 and 1280 x 960 modes, the rest of the resolutions ran swimmingly and 1600 x 1200 looks to be serious in terms of playability. Just think of the sniping possibilities! Nvidia did attempt to offer 1600 x 1200 in Quake II, and as great as it looked, it's certainly far from being playable at 18fps on a PII 450MHz. This makes the 32fps we saw running with the Voodoo 3 a pants-wetting leap forward, even

VOODOO 3 FEATURES

→ Dual 32-bit texture rendering architecture (impressive)

The Voodoo 3 features 32-bit internal circuitry, but only 16-bit external structure. The net result is similar to 22-bit color depth.

→ True multitexturing: 2 textures per pixel per clock cycle

Like the Voodoo 2, this chipset has two processors that enable it either to put two textures on a single pixel in a single clock cycle (for example: lighting effects) or to render a single texture in half the time.

→ Support for multi-triangle strips and fans (but not strippers)

This is common in modern 3D chips, but support for strippers and fans of strippers would also be greatly appreciated.

→ Single-pass, single-cycle bump-mapping (for single people)

This enables developers to create 3D-like textures in a single clock cycle. It also enables them to texture the face of Edward James Olmos.

→ Single-pass, single-cycle trilinear mip-mapping

Same thing, but here each pixel can be rendered for three different viewing distances in a single clock cycle.

→ Per-pixel atmospheric fog with programmable fog zones

How every game can look like a Nintendo 64 game.

→ Full-scene polygon-based edge anti-aliasing

No more jaggies.

→ Texture compositing for multitexture special effects

More special tricks using the Voodoo 3's second texture unit.

→ 8-tap anisotropic filtering

→ Support for 14 texture map formats

→ 8-bit palletized textures with full bilinear filtering

→ Verbally taunting lesser cards

TEXEL FILL RATES OF 3DFX-BASED CARDS

For those of you not yet in the know, the term megatexel is based upon a texel, which is simply a bilinear textured pixel. This form of measurement is standard in the 3D accelerator business, and the Voodoo 3 3000 has the most impressive numbers we've seen to date. The Voodoo 3 2000 is a little bit slower, but considering its low price and availability in consumer computers, the performance is mighty impressive.

*All units in megatexels per second

	0	50	100	150	200	250	300	350	400

Voodoo 3 3000

Voodoo 3 2000

Voodoo 2 SLI

Voodoo 2

Voodoo Banshee

Ahh, the chipset that will power Quake III Arena.
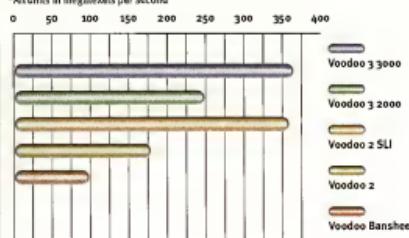
THE BIG QUESTION

CAN I SLI TWO VOODOO 3S?

The short answer: No, for now. Even though the Voodoo 3 will run games faster than an SLI'd dual-Voodoo 2 configuration, people already want to know whether or not they will be able to SLI their new cards. Because the Voodoo 3 is clearly targeted for computers with an AGP slot (which doesn't support SLI configuration), you will never be able to set up a typical SLI configuration on your PC.

While a two-slot solution will not work, 3Dfx has left open the option to SLI two Voodoo 3 chipsets on a single board, much like the Voodoo 2-based Quantum 3D Obsidian 2 X-24 card. Another option will be to include a slave slot on Voodoo 3 cards that enable another to be plugged into the back. Though this is a possibility, we will likely not see any cards with this technology until late 1999, if ever. We can only drool at the opportunities that a Voodoo 3 SLI configuration would bring.

We will, however, miss the days of trying to get an SLI configuration running in conjunction with another 2D/3D card. There's nothing quite like the frustration of conflicting hardware to make techie geeks feel important.

The Voodoo 3 can run *Quake* at 1600 x 1200 resolution at an amazing 32 frames per second.

though the drivers we were using were, as expected, very early. And don't forget that with the graphics clock being locked at 160MHz, the scores were 20% to 25% lower than you can expect when the final silicon allows for 183MHz.

Another exciting possibility that the Voodoo 3 promises is a high-end card at a low cost. Traditionally, gamers have had to pay more than $200 for the fastest Voodoo cards, but with last year's successful debut of the Banshee, 3Dfx is hoping to shoot for low-price sales success with the Voodoo 3. The chips are selling for $35 per Voodoo 3 2000 unit (in quantities of 10,000 units only, so don't get any ideas), and $45 per Voodoo 3 3000 unit.

This should correlate to a retail price of $150 to $200 per board once everything has been put together. However, the companies we talked to hinted that $150 is likely to be the going rate when the board makes its debut, probably in the late spring; insiders point to a late April or early May launch date.

Overclocking appears to be a thing of the past in the 3D graphics world, just as it is with the newer chips from Intel and AMD. It seems that 183MHz is as far as you're going to go with Voodoo 3.

Unfortunately, 3Dfx Interactive has again limited texture size to 256 x 256, with a 16-bit rendering ceiling. Because it has always been transfixed with speed, the company opted not to include true 32-bit rendering capabilities; it maintains that although 32-bit rendering is nice, doing it at the expense of performance isn't.

Gary Tarolli, 3Dfx Interactive's CTO and co-founder, stated in a recent interview with Sharky Extreme, "You should *never* judge image quality without considering frame rate, at least for games. ... At this point, I would say 16-bit rendering still wins out for a better gaming experience. When 32-bit rendering gets a lot faster, it won't be so, but we will support 32-bit rendering by then. Look at games today, you can't even tell the difference. Don't judge our 16 bits just by the fact that it's 16 bits! There's actually a lot of work we do to make it look better than just plain old 16 bits. It's actually more like 22 bits on the screen."

Though the spec sheet states that the Voodoo 3 will feature an AGP interface with support for 2X with sidebands, 3Dfx is actually using a memory transfer routine, as opposed to AGP 2X texturing.

So, if you already own two Voodoo 2 cards and are happy with your 2D board, do you need to get rid of the lot and replace your setup with a Voodoo 3? If the performance gain of Voodoo 3 is indeed minimal over a Voodoo 2 SLI configuration, then the answer is no, unless you really want those higher resolutions or need that extra slot. The performance gain over a single Voodoo 2 board will be extremely significant and will seriously warrant the upgrade.

One area that 3Dfx is banking on is making the higher resolutions playable, rather than just attainable. *Quake II* is very playable for single-player at 1600 x 1200, and if 3Dfx can increase the frame rate by the projected 20%, then high-res multiplayer gaming is a distinct probability. Until 32-bit rendering can be achieved at an acceptable level, speed is still king — and the Voodoo 3 looks to be the fastest 3D performer out there.

— ALEX "SHARKY" ROSS, editor in chief of Sharky Extreme, was a cage dancer at the 3Dfx Camdex '98 party

THE VOODOO 3 BENCHMARKS

The first tests of the card showed frame rates a little slower than those of Quantum 3D's Obsidian 2 X-24. But remember, the final board will be faster and will give higher frame rates. Here are the benchmarks, which were run on a Pentium II 450MHz with 128MB and an AGP Voodoo 3 3000 board clocked at 160MHz.

QUAKE II TIME DEMO 1

Resolution	0 fps	20 fps	40 fps	60 fps	80 fps	100 fps	
640 x 480							Voodoo3 3000 / Obsidian 2 X-24
800 x 600							
1024 x 768							
1600 x 1200	N/A						
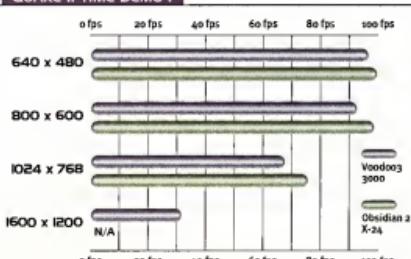
the PCXL *gaming* OLYMPICS

THE MOTHER OF ALL GAMING DECATHLONS (OKAY, THE ONLY GAMING DECATHLON)

At PCXL we've got a big sign that reads: "The shit must never be weak." Loosely translated, it is strict policy that every staffer's game skills must be honed to a razor's edge at all times, sharp enough to cut through a shoe or a tin can, ready at a moment's notice to frag, race, or just generally school any challengers. (Especially from other, lesser-skilled gaming mags *cough, PC Gamer, cough.*) After all, what use is it being a games journo if you can't play? It's about competition, and multiplayer gaming after all is the best competition you can find outside chess against Big Blue... but, whatever. We're all serious gamers, or at least we play them on TV,

so it shouldn't come as much surprise that we spend a lot of our time (when we're not writing brilliant copy) playing multiplayer games like *Half-Life*, *Rainbow Six*, and the current favorite, *Red Alert*.

But the question has come up on more than one occasion: Who da best? To find out, we've gotten

together so games – some old, some new, but all pretty good, and battled in a grueling decathlon over the span of two weeks. From first-person shooters to realtime strategy, sports, and racing games, the winner was to be declared the best overall gamer at PCXL. But this feature's not just about self-indulgent posturing and trash talking, oh no, it's a lot more than that. Well, maybe just a little more than that. With our contrasting playing styles, you might pick something up from the strategies used by the winners, and apply them to your game – specifically, how to beat different types of players. The one thing we know is that you can always stand to be better. Of course, some of us know that a little better than others...

THE CONTESTANTS

MIKE SALMON	ROB SMITH	ED LEE	DAN EGGER	HECTOR SALAZAR
HANDLE: Fishbo~	**HANDLE:**	**HANDLES:** Pooply	**HANDLE:** EastKhim	**HANDLE:** StickMan
TYPE OF COMPETITOR:	**TYPE OF COMPETITOR:**	**TYPE OF COMPETITOR:** Cocky and well versed in every game. Ed is clearly in the prime of his gaming career	**TYPE OF COMPETITOR:**	**TYPE OF COMPETITOR:** Quiet and in his surprisingly confident manner
STRENGTHS:	**STRENGTHS:**	**STRENGTHS:**	**STRENGTHS:**	**STRENGTHS:**
WEAKNESSES: impatient	**WEAKNESSES:**	**WEAKNESSES:** Youth often leads to erratic periods of play	**WEAKNESSES:** G most run	**WEAKNESSES:** e.g. bad dresser, non-existent strategy skills whatsoever
QUOTE: "I was cheated!"	**QUOTE:**	**QUOTE:** "I'm the greatest, but some don't believe me tho"	**QUOTE:**	**QUOTE:**
ODDS OF WINNING:	**ODDS OF WINNING:**	**ODDS OF WINNING:** 3 to 1	**ODDS OF WINNING:**	**ODDS OF WINNING:** 10 to 1

THE EVENTS

QUAKE II

WINNER: ROB

Q 2DMs The Edge: The preferred map for PGL competition because of its superior balance and layout. This was the natural choice, and we played five 30 frag matches in a 10/7/3/1 point system. This game, like the other FPS's, is a test of reaction time, aim, and movement, with little to get in the way of pure action. Although it was close, Rob got the win by winning 3 of the 5 games outright. railgun vs. rocket launcher seemed to be the main confrontation. "Win at Quoke and nothing else matters," said Rob smugly. **WEAPONS:** Rocket launcher and hyperblaster (typical!)

STYLE: Calculated aggressive **TIPS:** "Practice with the pros. Getting my ass whupped by some of the PGL pros really teaches you some lessons. Those lessons were then used to remarkable effect on the PCXL amateurs. Let's face it, *Quake II* is the Blue Ribbon event of this whole contest, this is the one that everyone wanted to win. But I did. Hurrah for Rob."

ONE OF THE BEST TACTICS IN 10N-1 PLAY IS TO SOFTEN UP THE OTHER GUY WITH ROCKETS AND THEN SWITCH TO THE CHAINGUN. WAIL ON THEM MERCILESSLY UNTIL THEY TURN TO GIBS.

RAINBOW SIX

WINNER: ED

M ore of a thinking man's shooter. We played team survival, I mean, what other modes are there? A 2-on-2 round robin for three different maps: Amazon, Estate, and Hacienda. (No newbie Airport or Road Ambush for us.) 3 points for the winners, 0 for the losers, with 1 bonus point if you got both enemy kills, and 1 point subtracted for killing your teammate. Ed got the clear victory, scoring the bonus point no less than seven times. "The pregame meal is the key to victory," explained Ed. "Or, maybe it isn't. Damn, I'm kinda hungry right now. Feed me."

EO'S ABILITY TO SWITCH TO THE MOTION SENSOR, SCAN THE MAP, THEN GET BACK IN NORMAL VIEW IS WHAT GIVES HIM THE EDGE.

WEAPONS: CAR-15 **STYLE:** Aggressive beat-runner **TIPS:** "You can't be expected to shoulder a team' entire offense (unless you're playing with the inept PCXL crew), so you're best off having a specific goal or pattern in mind and going about your business with single-minded determination. Constantly think ahead, stay calm, use that heartbeat sensor, and aim. I don't screw around with grenades much, the game seems to reward aggressive shooters in close standoff situations."

UNREAL

WINNER: ROB

T here were only two real choices for maps, PCXL's own *Cone of Tragedy* and *Shooting Gallery* (Shameless self-promotion alert!). We played five games to a 30 frag count and a 10/7/3/1 point system. For Cone, most of the action took place on the rocket arena-style circular walkway. Some success was had by snipers managing to get to the level's secret camping area. *Shooting Gallery* was fast paced

as well, with the nature of the level being that you are never safe and that attacks can come from anywhere. "I kicked youse lossers' butts," gloated Rob. **WEAPONS:** Flak cannon, minigun, and 8-Ball launcher **STYLE:** Calculated aggressive **TIPS:** "On the famous *Cone of Tragedy,* the key to success was not falling. The longer you can stay on the rim with a loaded eightball, the more kills you rack up. Not only does falling cost you your life (even if

you manage to make the camping spots) it costs you time — while others were busy falling, I was dextrously running up top and capping their re-appearing butts."

SHOOTING GALLERY WON FOURTH PLACE IN A WWW WON.NET LEVEL DESIGN CONTEST. CONE OF TRAGEDY HASN'T WON ANYTHING, AND NEVER WILL.

HALF-LIFE

WINNER: ED

We played four random maps to 20 frags (Stalkyard, Undertow, Subtransit, Snark Pit) and a 10/7/3/1 point system. H-L DM was a bit new to the contestants given that a certain software publisher was somewhat negligent on sending us final boxed copies in anything resembling a timely fashion but we all found it quite good, and uh, worth the wait I suppose. Ed's complete dominance of this event was a surprise given the fact that Rob is the in-house H-L guru. Oh well, goes to show just cause you

THERE'S NOTHING MORE EMBARRASSING THAN A CROWBAR KILL, BUT IT'S FAR MORE DEADLY THAN THE PISTOL, IN CROWDED GAMES, WAIL LIKE A MADMAN AND RACK UP THE KILLS

can write about a game don't mean you can play it! Course, that's not a problem for Ed, he can't write. "I am the prox mine fool," he cackled.

WEAPONS: Shotgun, crossbow, combat rifle

STYLE: Erratic aggressive

TIPS: "First off, I kick ass. My favorite weapons are the shotgun and the crossbow, though the com-

bat rifle wins for overall versatility – grenade 'em, then finish 'em with a burst of fire. The Firehose of Death is also good for midrange. Basically, sticking to mid and close range engagements with any of these weapons (accept the bow – that's sniper mode) will pay off because of one thing – locational damage. Hard to survive two shotgun shells to the head at point blank."

COMMAND & CONQUER

WINNER: DAN

We dusted off this oldie for some unknown reason – oh yeah, we happened to have a few copies lying around. It was pretty amazing how fun this game still is after all this time, even in craptacular 320x240 VGA. We played three 4-player FFA games on various maps, on a 10/7/3/1 point system – the 2-4 places being determined by kill count. There was a distinct advantage to playing with the SVGA Win 95 software over the

oid DOS 320 x 240 that a couple of contestants relied on. "Eliminate the weak," was Dan's motto.

UNITS: Medium tank, infantry

STYLE: Aggressive opportunist

TIPS: "The best bet in a small-map match is to know when to attack. I built my ground forces quickly and then waited until I heard armies attacking each other before I would attack. Hitting their weakened forces with superior numbers worked every time. If my forces were still strong I would attack the other army's base immediately, hoping to hit them while they still aren't recovered from the battle."

SO SIMPLE IT'S BEAUTIFUL, THE ORIGINAL C&C BROUGHT BACK ALL KINDS OF MEMORIES, AND A SURPRISING VICTORY FOR DAN

ARE YOU AN OLYMPIAN?

HOW TO RUN YOUR OWN PCXL GAMING DECATHLON

Ok, now that you've read about our decathlon, its time to get one of your own put together and find out who's the best in your crew. For some games we played such as Populous and Need For Speed 3, everyone needs their own disc which means some serious cost. But all the other games can purely much be spawned off a single copy or in the case of the DOS game, just played off a disc.

Four people is a good number for ballistic – anything more can make FFAs, especially in RTS games, less valid for finding out who's the best. If you've got the time, 1-on-1s are more accurate, but they're not as fun. Check out our LAN party feature (Issue 3) for some more specifics.

STARCRAFT

WINNER: ED

DESPITE A QUICK CRAM OF TAC-
TICS FROM LAST ISSUE'S TIPS FOR
STARCRAFT STARDOM FROM THE
PGL CHAMPION, ED WAS NOT TO
BE DENIED IN A COLD, CALCULAT-
ED DESTRUCTION OF OUR FORCES
AND EGOS. BASTARD.

Ok, this was a bit unfair – Ed's total SC playing time doubled the rest of the staff put together. With a scintillating 26-0 record vs. human opponents on battle.net, Ed is clearly a force to be reckoned with. (Say, who wrote this feature, anyway?) Anyway, a FFA on The Hunters, using in-game point totals for scoring, ended up in the predictable results of Ed overwhelming the others with sheer numbers of Hydras and Mutas.

"The one time being a *Starcraft* geek paid off," Ed mused.

UNITS: Hydralisk, Mutalisk

STYLE: Sneaky opportunist

TIPS: "Been playing lots of Zerg lately. I try to gain the psychological advantage with an early Zergling rush, then expand aggressively and start cranking out hydras and mutas. I don't climb the tech tree too much in general though I dig upgrading. Course, FFA strategy

is pretty different — timing is everything and being a defensive expansionist can pay off."

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING

WINNER: ED

This one was picked solely upon its virtues as a game that no one on staff had ever played and that we got multiple copies of earlier that week. After a few practice games to get the hang of it, we played three games on the default maps with all spells. The results were

pretty ugly, but Ed managed to pull off yet another win. "Ok this is getting boring, someone else win," said Ed.

SPELLS: Earthquake, Lightning, Swarm

STYLE: Early attacker

TIPS: "Whatever, this game seems pretty perverse if you ask me. Only 4 types of units, what's up with that? Anyway, I found that it's hard to

stop tons of warriors – they can absolutely destroy firewarriors in melee, and backed up with a few earthquake or lightning spells, fughedaboutit. When attacking their base, the key is to go for the huts – without followers to provide magic power you can't do shit."

IN A TEST OF OUR PURE GAMING
TALENT, TAKING ON POPULOUS
WAS A CHALLENGE MET MOST
CONVINCINGLY BY ED. BASTARD.

RED ALERT

WINNER: Q!

The great success of the C&C tournament resulted in a revival of its prequel, which again upon playing it we all realized we had forgotten how fun it was. Two games on various maps, no crates, FFA, same scoring system as C&C. Surprise contestant was art director Q!, who demonstrated the results of way more hours of multiplayer experience as he whupped the dismayed editors with ruthless tank rushes. The most disturbing result of this contest is the rebirth of *Red Alert*. It now ranks as one of the most played games in the office, and is the sole reason our website wasn't updated for an entire week. "Walk softly, and carry a big can of whup ass, baby," chortled Q!.

UNITS: Medium Tank (lots of 'em)

STYLE: Tank rusher (bastard)

TIPS: "Ahhh, yes! You just can't enjoy a resounding victory here at PCXL without hearing editor-in-chief Mike Salmon wahwah-ing. Tissue, Michael? Cheater he calls me. What's more fair and conventional than my method of warfare; kicking ass, using the masses? Build at least two ore refineries, and two war factories. Crank out at least 4 ore trucks in order to ensure that funds get in, then the rest build tanks! And, watch your opponents start crying."

ANY GAME THAT
THE EDITORS
LOSE TO THE ART
GUYS HAS TO
HAVE FUNDAMEN-
TAL DESIGN
FLAWS, RIGHT?

THE EVENTS

WE'RE NOT DONE

The manically competitive **PCXL** staff didn't stop with computer games. What next...?

POOL
Dan won due to an unlikely and horrifying series of eightball scratches

PING PONG
Rob with his trademark reverse paddle grip was the champion

CROW SCARING
Crows were being scared left and right when Hector stepped to the plate

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS
A series of close, tense matches punctuated by the creative use and counter-use of various RPS gambits (Paper Dolls followed by Avalanche was quite popular) resulted in a three-way tie. An appeal has been made to the RPS Rules Council to see how best to determine the winner. Stay tuned.

THE CHART

Quake II
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Unreal
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Rainbow Six
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Half-Life
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Command & Conquer
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

StarCraft
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Red Alert
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Populous: The Beginning
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

NHL '99
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

Need for Speed III
MIKE
ROB
ED
DAN
Q!

10   20   30   40   50

OVERALL WINNER: ED
"I rule! Bling on the chicks! Where's my Ferrari? And I'm available for endorsements." Uh...it ain't happening, Ed. We'll just let him have his little delusions for now...

NHL '99

WINNER: MIKE

A s the sports game representative, *NHL '99* was definitely up to the task. With improvements to goalie AI negating last year's scoring tricks including the infamous "Ed Goal," scoring proved much more difficult. As always, checking and shot totals were through the roof and, pass percentage way down, in **PCXL**'s up-and-down the-ice, make-a-mockery-of-the-sport style of play. Mike pulled off the win over close contenders Q and Hector. "They can't score with their backs on the ice," observed Mike.

TEAM: Dallas Stars
STYLE: Aggressive forechecking
TIPS: "I was the dominant champion in *NHL '98*, but the new tougher goalkeepers and lack of practice have weakened my game

THIS ONE MIKE JUST HAD TO WIN, BUT Q! PROVED THAT ART GUYS PLAY SPORTS GAMES TOO BY PUSHING HIM TO THE LIMIT IN A TENSE PLAY-OFF FINAL.

for '99. However my crushing defensive checks, crisp passing, and exploiting of bugs won out in the end. If you shoot the puck from center ice with the right touch it goes over the goalies head and into the net. The other easy goal is a one-timer off of a face-off. About 1 of 10 goes in. The key is to get yourself in position for these shots and to make the sure the opponent doesn't. This is accomplished through a physical style of play. Bob Probert would be proud."

NEED FOR SPEED III

WINNER: MIKE

F or the sole driving game (after briefly considering staff favorite Sierra's *Driver's Education '99*), we played the full circuit of courses in stock Ferrari 355s with the old 10/7/3/1 point system. Traffic was on, which made it harder for anyone to break away from the pack. After a series of completely erratic races, things started to settle down but the frequency of head-on collisions with powersliding minivans didn't. "High speed rac-

ing IS a contact sport," said Mike.
CAR: Ferrari 355 Spider
STYLE: Aggressive powerslider
TIPS: "I used extreme focus and brute force to grind my way to victory. Dan was busy doing donuts several laps back, Ed was admiring head-on traffic, so that left me face-to-face with Rob (AKA: The British Bulldozer). It was clear that the computer was cheating in Rob's favor, but my sheer skill won out in the end. Whenever a car came within my vicinity I smashed it or ran it off the road. This technique is tougher than it sounds. The key is to make sure the opponent is left fender first into a wall before continuing." ▶

WARNING: DON'T DRIVE IMMEDIATELY AFTER EXTENDED PLAYING OF NFSIII. WHY ASK THE LOCAL POLICE DEPT. FOR THEIR REPORT.

54

HISTOGRAM   AVG. SCORE   9

WarCraft 2   Diablo   StarCraft
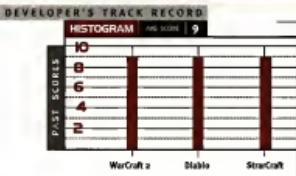
Diablo II

A million-plus seller gets bigger, badder, and better

Blizzard is currently the best developer in this industry. They don't exist on hot developer "names", potential, high profile funds or mass media publicity. Their goal is to create great games, and where others try, get the occasional hit and promise the world, Blizzard has consistently, if infrequently, delivered. *Diablo* began as a turn-based *X-COM* style RPG and evolved into an action game with an accessibility that kept this particular gamer pulling his first office "all-nighter" in completing the damn thing.

After witnessing the forming of the sequel, I'm certainly in no doubt that *Diablo II* will not do anything vaguely edging on revolutionary, and still be so amazingly playable that it breaks even more sales records. The concept is the same, the isometric view is the same, the experience point progression is the same, the style of combat is the same and the rewards for succeeding are the same as *Diablo*. But there are more character classes (five playable ones – the Amazon, Paladin, Sorceress, Necromancer and Barbarian), more spells, more magical items, more realms to explore, more monsters to fight, more variations to character advancement and ▶ p. 58

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Blizzard North
PUBLISHER →	Blizzard
RELEASE DATE →	Q4 99
3D SUPPORT →	Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED · · · EXCITED · · · AROUSED

THE HYPE

Millions (well, loads) of units were sold. The clamor from those buyers alone is enough to make this a huge hit.

THE HURDLE

Diablo II faces the traditional sequel hurdle – is a bigger, better, faster game of the same enough?

THE HIT

Excruciatingly painstakingly balanced games are their hallmark and *Diablo II* won't ship until it's shipshape.

Diablo II: More monsters to mug for gold.

FIVE QUESTIONS

BILL ROPER, DIRECTOR OF THIRD PARTY DEVELOPMENT, TOLD US THAT HE COULD "GET AWAY WITH A LOT OF STUFF" IN HIS "NON-INVOLVED, YET STILL CONTRIBUTING SOMETHING" ROLE AND THAT HE WAS PART OF THE TEAM WHO WOULD JUST THROW IDEAS IN. STILL, HE WAS THE POPULAR FACE OF BLIZZARD DEVELOPMENT ON ITS PRESS TOUR, AND HERE WERE HIS EXCELLENT RESPONSES TO THE INCISIVE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: How much of *Diablo II* have you yet to unveil?

A: Lots. We've not shown anything of the third area, not gone in to any details on the quests, monsters, bosses or specific items. Almost all of this stuff is designed, but everything is subject to change at a moment's notice.

Q: How many people are working on the project?

A: There are about 36 people at Blizzard North, with 33 in research and design on the project, comprising 17 artists, 11 programmers, sound guys, etc. In all, there will be over 40 people.

Q: Does anyone in the office have horns?

A: Actually, *Diablo* lives in the office. A Hollywood special effects house created a suit and it stands in reception scaring everyone.

Q: Who's the evilest in the office?

A: It's tough, they're all pretty evil. But Dave Brevick, the president and lead programmer gets great ideas in the shower and then walks in to work and says "I know how to do 'x'" and everyone wonders how many more late nights accomplishing that will take.

Q: Why do Blizzard games sell so damn well?

A: Everyone at the company is a gamer, so we're our best focus group. *Diablo* didn't come out of us saying "let's make an action/RPG" it came from us saying "let's make something fun." We make something that are accessible – an RPG that doesn't require hours to create a character, and that you can play without opening up a giant manual.

Diablo II Gallery

DII has many more wide open areas, allowing plenty of monsters to attack if given the chance. Details on running have yet to be finalized though you're likely to tire the more weight your character is carrying.

56

(Above, and left) As it's still relatively early in development, Blizzard has yet to decide on all of the details. Such as how much, if any, mana is regenerated. (below) The javelin gives the option of a jab attack, as well as being hurled at monsters from long distances.

THE NEW CLASSES

Lucy Lawless is an Amazon (just a wee sex at that!)

AMAZON
REASON TO PLAY–> She's a chick that kicks ass
BEST SKILL–> Walking Fire spell
PLAYING ONLINE–> Geek dudes think you're a chick

PALADIN
REASON TO PLAY–> Because all the pretty flowers in the world need protecting, and you just had too many happy pills that day
BEST SKILL–> Charge – run at and then whack a monster with a shield bash, resume these flying backwards
PLAYING ONLINE–> Slightly effeminate nature could lead to people calling you "fansoy"

SORCERESS
REASON TO PLAY–> Bigger chest than the Amazon
BEST SKILL–> Chain lightning – hit one monster and it flows to the next, and looks extremely cool
PLAYING ONLINE–> Y'know, there's a time when being a bad-ass chick gets respect. This is one of those times

NECROMANCER
REASON TO PLAY–> They're the bad-ass mod dogs
BEST SKILL–> Creating golems – sacrificing items for golems. Weapons create good attacking golems, and armor makes them better armoured
PLAYING ONLINE–> Everyone's going to want to have that cool bone armor and shield first

BARBARIAN
REASON TO PLAY–> Manly, what magic? I of my club
BEST SKILL–> One skill – bashing monsters with stuff
PLAYING ONLINE–> I have no brain and I must speak – the typical game chat room

From desert, dungeons, and jails – Diablo II offers much more variety in locales.

The town has changed slightly, but the Town Portal spell remains vital to having any success in Diablo II.

▶ P. 55 design... you get the idea – there's just more.

So down to the nitty-gritty. Three classes make up Diablo II, beginning in the familiar rustic forest town, progressing to the Valley of the Kings for a desert-style second act before moving to a final showdown in a jungle-cum-rain forest affair that's yet to be unveiled to the outside world. The characters from the original have largely moved on, but there will be cameos for Diablo lore devotees from Grimwald and Wurt along the way. Three character classes of NPCs will roam the town including the popular Rogues, who will feature in a quest to save their leader, resulting in being allowed to hire Rogues as mercenaries to take on your next dungeon crawl.

The maps remain randomly created so monsters and items will appear in different locations from game to game. But character classes now have skills. On top of the five stats points available upon raising a level, you'll also get one skill point. Each class has three skill areas, each with so different skills and the way that you divide your skill points as you progress through levels depends entirely on how you want your character to develop.

Also, the addition of new item areas such as the belt (which increases what you can carry from 4 to 12), boots, and gloves gives ample opportunity to create more magic items.

New areas to explore include one temple that's been given an Escher-style brief of floating platforms, allowing the artists to go nuts without worrying about whether this part of the map connects to that. That's alongside the catacombs, jail, sewers, and many, many more, currently incorporating 63 different locations within just two of the three acts.

Combat is of the Diablo simplicity, but more so. There's no more mouse-mashing as holding the left mouse button down maintains a stream of attack in the direction you're pointing. The right mouse button has been set aside for a secondary option, so you can prime a spell for a two-pronged attack. It all adds to the strategy.

Of course, playing over battle.net was a big pull of the original and Diablo II aims to take that involvement further. Aside from client/server network titles that will allow greater control over the heinous hacking and cheating that went on with the original, new gameplay devices are being added. First is a bank. Rather than leaving thousands of gold lying around the town, it can now be banked and called upon whenever you are in the game world. Leaving stuff strewn on the ground leaves it open, rightly, to be pilfered by anyone. For multiplayer security, high-level, rich characters will be able to pool resources for a Guild Hall. The cost will be exorbitant but on battle.net you'll be able to create a game with your Guild Hall name and password and enter it to leave gear in a locker. Even without the Guild Hall, trades will be made simpler using a UO-style interface to allow fair, but speedy deals to be completed.

The first thing to strike me about Dil is that it isn't a complete reinvention, but then we didn't expect that. Sure, Glide support has been added in show-off some incredibly funky spell effects, and sure, the lighting looks great. But it looks like nothing more than a great enhancement of the original. My only concern is the balancing. Given StorCroft's delays to get that right and given Dil's greater scope over the original, that's going to take some time. But, yet again, I fear that another night is going to go without sleep on the trail of arch-nemesis Diablo – only this time, it might take two nights. ▶

–ROB SMITH lasted two seconds on battle.net before being blasted in the town and vowing never to return until the hacking was over.

DO SOMETHING MORON!
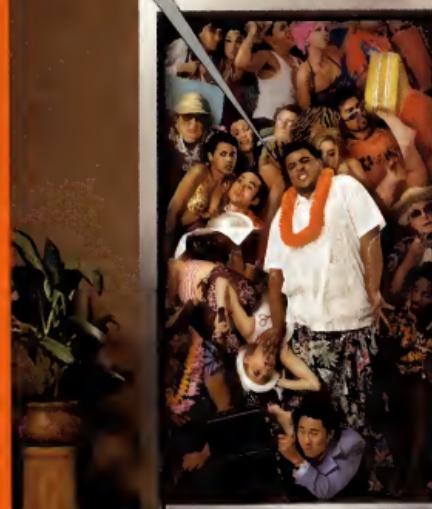
Waikiki

An anvil on the head is the most common cause of death among cartoon characters

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM | AVG. SCORE | 8

WHO ARE THEY?

As you may remember from last month, Digital Anvil was started by industry veteran and Wing Commander creator Chris Roberts. It already has a significant name. Signed to a big contract with Microsoft, DA also includes Erin Roberts and Robert Rodriguez — director of El Mariachi and friend of Quentin Tarantino.

Starlancer

A space combat sim from the makers of Wing Commander — go figure

While his brother, Chris, was off directing the Wing Commander feature film, Erin Roberts and the rest of the team responsible for Privateer 2: The Darkening began sketching out ideas for another movie of sorts. Starlancer is meant to be a space combat sim like no other, with story and action that capture the essence of a classic World War II dogfight motion picture set in space.

A hundred years from now, the major world powers colonize some of the planets in our solar system. Needless to say, this free-for-all doesn't work, so the U.S., England, Japan, Russia, Germany, and China duke it out in space. You assume the role of a budding pilot who is part of a newly formed civilian coalition named the 45th Volunteers Squadron; the missions and branching story will vary significantly depending on which nation you choose to fight under. In all campaigns, the actions in one mission will affect the future in others. For instance, if you can squeeze through enemy lines and destroy a radar station, you'll have fewer fleets to worry about during the next confrontation.

Starlancer features an easy-to-use drag-and-drop interface for equipping one of 12 spacecraft with weapons such as nova cannons, collapser guns, and a funky missile capable of tearing a hole in space for a quick getaway. The game's graphics look only mildly interesting in preliminary screenshots, and although it's early in the development cycle, there are no signs that the graphic detail will be stepped up. More than 80 kinds of spacecraft are planned, however, so expect some cool-looking designs.

Because Starlancer is in an early stage of development, PCXL didn't get a chance to see much of the gameplay in action. Digital Anvil promises a state-of-the-art flight engine and cunning artificial

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Digital Anvil
PUBLISHER →	Microsoft
RELEASE DATE →	Fall '99
API SUPPORT →	TBD

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

With Chris Roberts' rep, new technology, multiplayer support, and no cheesy FMV, Starlancer is getting lots of attention.

THE HURDLE

It has stiff competition, including Lucas-Arts' Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance, and so far the graphics don't look up to par.

THE HIT

The Robertses have already created great space sims; Microsoft's muscle may make Starlancer the most successful yet.

The pure scope of the battles in Starlancer have you flying through an armada of giant spaceships. The developers hope this will give you the feeling that you are in the middle of an epic battle.

60

Hangin' in the hangar. Hey, where's Mark Hamill?

FIVE QUESTIONS

ERIN ROBERTS IS THE PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR FOR *STARLANCER*. ALTHOUGH HE TALKS A MILE A MINUTE, WE WERE ABLE TO GET HIM TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS SOMEWHAT COHERENTLY.

Q: What are the key feature differences between *Starlancer* and the *Wing Commander* series?
A: A new epic storyline set in Earth's solar system and a huge attention to detail for space. In missions, setting a mood not unlike the carrier warfare of World War II.

Q: Technologically speaking, is there anything unique in *Starlancer* that couldn't be pulled off with the *Wing Commander* series?
A: Mostly we can now push many more projos around and also have a bunch more scripting and animation in space. The rest are basically design differences.

Q: People were disappointed with the lack of multiplayer support in the *Wing Commander* series. Aside from deathmatch, what are some of the types of co-op features planned for *Starlancer*?
A: Players will be able to progress and be promoted, giving them more options over which ships to fly, and also the most senior players will be given the ability to not only coordinate an attack in the briefings but also give commands to their fellow players while in the air.

Q: Digital Anvil's motto is "The fusion of silicon and celluloid." Without full-motion video, what cinematic effects are planned for *Starlancer*?
A: The digital effects team who has just completed the effects for the *Wing Commander* movie will be creating all the cinematics for *Starlancer*. This will give the players the quality of visuals that they expect from a space flight action/adventure from Digital Anvil.

Q: What's your favorite arcade space shooter and why?
A: *Lunar Lander*, because I loved dodging those asteroids on the way to the surface. And *Defender*, because I was so bad at that game — my ego just kept on making me go back for more punishment.

There are a dozen warships to choose from, each with different strengths and limitations. Now where did I park my Kurgen Corvette again?

intelligence. Erin Roberts, the game's producer, offered this plan: "We wanted to create an AI system where each ship decides what to do, when to do it, and for what reason." However, developer promises are something we distrust, so look for future articles on the progress of the game.

And what about multiplayer,

the one element missing in all Roberts brothers productions? *Starlancer* will support four to six players (i.e., nations) over the Internet (likely over the MSN Gaming Zone exclusively) and eight players over a LAN. Aside from straight deathmatch, it's possible to play the full story cooperatively or go head-to-head

FREELANCER

THE SKINNY → Yet another space combat game scheduled for release sometime in 2000. The project is headed by Chris Roberts, marking his first game as lead designer since *Wing Commander IV*. The focus will be threefold: space exploration, trading, and, of course, combat. As Roberts puts it, "It'll be like *Elite* and *Privateer* turned up to 11...."

THE STORY → In setting 300 to 400 years in the future, you play a free-lance space pilot looking to make a few bucks (Han Solo, perhaps?), and find yourself caught in the middle of an off-planet feud among the earth's economic powers and meddling in the affairs of intergalactic bounty hunters and pirates. More than 200 people will be able to play over the Internet in a variety of massive multiplayer games.

in single missions.

Much has happened in space combat simulation since the Roberts brothers were working on *Wing Commander*. It remains to be seen if the expectations of today's generation of gamers have passed them by. Their insistence on merging celluloid and silicon is one that could go horribly wrong (it usually does, see SouthPeak). The quality of their previous titles, however, leads us to expect an interesting future for *Starlancer*.

— MARC SALTZMAN *despises compers and will be ready to pummel anyone hiding behind Saturn.*

Roberts says there will be backdrops of the planets in our solar system behind the dogfights — sounds cool to us.

The "fusion of silicon and celluloid" is the best way to describe *Baywatch: The Movie*

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

| HISTOGRAM | avg score | 5 |

PAST SCORES: 10, 8, 6, 4, 2

CART Precision Racing | Monster Truck Madness 2 | Hellbender | Terminal Velocity
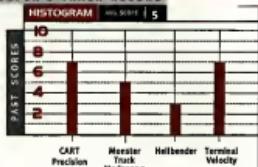
Nocturne

Brand-new 3D engine to power, er, a graphic adventure

It's not every day that we witness the unveiling of a brand-new graphics engine, complete with a list of attributes long enough to make the hardcore tech geeks moist with anticipation, and find it attached to a graphic adventure.

This kind of thing is usually associated with the latest in a long line of first-person shooters ("This one's really going to rewrite the genre," yadda, yadda, ad nauseam). But that's what happened when Terminal Reality showed us the early version of Nocturne.

TRI's development credits include Monster Truck Madness and Hellbender for Microsoft. This inauspicious start managed to pay the bills while founder and president Mark Randel studiously worked on the Nocturne engine.

And it seems to have been worth it. Standing out among Nocturne's bullet-point features, the ability to display (say this next line in menacing Dr. Evil voice) 1 billion colors onscreen should add incredible detail to the landscapes, and the realtime volumetric lighting and fog should both provide atmosphere, with realtime shadows and mirrors supplying a dark, moody style. "We're looking to create a 3D action/adventure with a cinematic feel," commented

Randel, "and so we're only supporting 32-bit color mode, and have created the engine so that it utilizes 100% of both the processor and video card."

During the demo, the fog and light were extremely impressive. The light seemed to cascade subtly through the fog, creating a drifting effect that could have come right out of all those old black-and-white zombie movies.

But the pièce de résistance was the mirroring effect. For instance, the main character (known as "The Stranger") held a lantern while standing before a mirror, and the realistic reflection of light and shadow in both the room and the mirror was staggering. It didn't stop there. The mirror was

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER →	GOD
RELEASE DATE →	Halloween '99
API SUPPORT →	Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

Brand-spanking-new engine coming from a company with a solid, but not stellar, track record.

THE HURDLE

Now it's technology without much game, and what game exists looks like Resident Evil — not really a bad thing, but it's old.

THE HIT

The cinematic style of the atmospheric environments may create an adventure with the grip everyone's been waiting for.

The mirroring effect in Nocturne is astonishing and lends itself to many surreal gameplay options.

smashed into thousands of shards, leaving fragments hanging in the ornamental frame. The Stranger walked past those fragments, and they mirrored him perfectly as the light cast jagged shadows on the floor.

Not only was the effect impressive, but so was the gameplay use of this technology. One test character walked past a mirror that reflected her image; this reflection then morphed into a zombie and jumped through what was actually a hole in the wall (disguised, cunningly, as a mirror) and attacked her. Very impressive stuff.

For character movement, a skeletal animation system (incorporated in TRI's proprietary NightMoves engine) has been developed, supported by a "cloth simulation" system. This makes a long coat or flowing cape act independently of the main character, so that it hangs loosely, swings as the character moves, and wobbles subtly when caught by a breeze. Combined with 3D positional sound, the *Nocturne* engine is evidently well suited to creating a detailed, believable environment.

Note to self: Never be with woman who has skull for headboard.

FIVE QUESTIONS

NOCTURNE'S ENGINE CREATOR AND PRESIDENT OF TRI, MARK RANDEL, PROFESSED GREAT ADMIRATION FOR PCXL, SO WE HAD TO ASK HIM THE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q. How important is it, when spending two years developing an engine, to ensure that it will be useful for more than one game?
A: It's critical. For example, for my upcoming game *Fly!*, I've been able to integrate the true color-rendering code so that all of the texture maps look as good as possible.

Q. *Nocturne*'s definitely in the horror category. Why did you choose that?
A: It is a perfect genre to show off the volumetric lighting and fogging, and I've always wanted to do a horror game.

Q. What's the scariest nocturnal experience you've had?
A: We agreed not to talk about it. Nothing happened. Really. Talk about what?

Q. Would Bela Lugosi have been your first choice for the main character?
A: He would have made a better villain.

Q. How come all you developers are in Texas? What's so great about Texas?
A: (1) No state income tax. Makes that Viper a little cheaper. (2) No state sales tax on items purchased for developing games. (3) The Art Institute of Dallas keeps training great artist after artist. (4) We hate the cold. (5) Game developers are all mavericks in some way.

For story, TRI has turned to the horror genre of "heroic pulp" — dark, fog-draped landscapes populated by zombies and other denizens of George Romero movies. In the role of The Stranger, you must rid a castle of its vampire problem. But you'll also have the chance to play a female character, Doc Holliday, and interact with a variety of NPCs who'll push the storyline forward. "We wanted to focus on the action rather than long passages of dialogue," said Randel.

The big question, however, is how the game will play. The style is right out of *Resident Evil*, with the camera flipping to a set point in each room. We're promised an adventure involving the pulling of levers, finding of keys, and manipulating of objects — not anything to get too excited about. But already there are signs that *Nocturne* will have some surprises. For example, vampires chased the fleeing Stranger through several rooms, negotiating stairs and doors very effectively before being peppered with crossbow bolts. In another scene, The Stranger managed to blow one zombie's limbs off, which were then picked up and wielded menacingly by other creatures intent on doing harm.

There were hints at inventive

One of life's greatest mysteries: How do you kill what is, in essence, already dead?

HOOKERS

HEIDI FLEISS
STATUS→ Expensive Hollywood madame
SERVICE→ Provide perverted celebrity types with discreet personalities
QUOTE→ "So, Charlie, you like transvestite cheerleaders. That shouldn't be a problem"

DIVINE BROWN
STATUS→ Street-blow street hooker
SERVICE→ Provide perverted English clientele types with cheap discreet personalities
QUOTE→ "hottie."

TRANSVESTITE HOOKER (NAMELESS)
STATUS→ Cross-dressing hook that'll pretty much do anything for a couple of bucks
SERVICE→ Provide Eddie Murphy with something no woman could
QUOTE→ (from Eddie) "I was just giving her ——r, it — a ride!" (Yeah, you gave 'it' a ride, all right)

gameplay features rather than great revolutionary ideas, but that might be enough. This *Alone in the Dark*/*Resident Evil*-style action/adventure has been ignored over the last year or so, and though the horror genre is not unusual, the stylish engine promises to give TRI plenty of scope for creating something original, moody, and scary.

— ROB SMITH *hasn't a clue how the technology works, but boy was he impressed with that mirroring effect.*

MULTIPLAYER FOCUS. *THE FIRST 3D SHOOTER DESIGNED
FROM THE BOTTOM UP TO MAXIMIZE FULL-SQUAD,
TOTAL-IMMERSION MULTIWARRIOR GAMING.*

TRUE TERRAIN™ LANDSCAPES.
*YES, VIRGINIA, THERE'S A SINFULLY
REAL WORLD OUT THERE. EVEN WEATHER!*

THE ULTIMATE IN FIRST-P

DEDICATED COMMANDER SCREEN.
*RADAR FROM ABOVE. SCOPE THE
NASTIES. DEPLOY THE TROOPS.
CALL THE SHOTS – LIKE A
TRUE COMMANDER AND
CONQUEROR.*

STARSIEGE

ZOOM SCOPE. *TOO FAR TO SHOOT?
ZOOM IN FOR THE EXTREME CLOSE-UP.*

It was in 1898 that Fred T. Jane wrote his first book, *Jane's All the World's Fighting Ships*

Fleet Command

Job title: Commander in Chief of a Big-Ass Modern Arsenal of Naval Firepower

O K, thinking of Jane's forthcoming *Fleet Command* as just a realtime strategy game is like calling football "a game." While on the surface it most certainly is a game, underneath there's a primal center pumping out some empowering wave of emotion, dedication, and sheer bloody-mindedness. Such is the case with EA's first significant

entry in the realtime strategy genre. *Fleet Command* may, for popular understanding, be pitched as an RTS, but that does a disservice to the scary amount of detail and sheer scope of this naval combat simulation epic.

You may not be too familiar with the Jane's line. It's impressive in that "private company working closely with the military" kind of way. Jane's Information

Group, the main business unit that creates the books and manuals charting the finest detail of the world's combat arsenal, no doubt employs shady men in black and does deals in dangerous underground parking lots for the latest information. Jane's knows its stuff and then some, and its association with EA has yielded a slew of critically acclaimed military combat sims covering land, sea, and air. But never an RTS game.

For *Fleet Command*, Jane's joined forces with the naval analysts, trainers, and all-around experts of Sonalysts. The result is shaping up to be an RTS of massive scope, incredible complexity, and fascinating potential.

Sixteen world naval powers are represented, ranging from the might of the U.S. fleet through the remnants of the U.K.'s once-proud navy to the upstart Middle East powers of Iran and Libya, all the way to Argentina, Taiwan, and China. The early alpha build that I played featured four campaigns set in the Bay of Bengal, the Strait of Malacca, the Taiwan Straits, and Kuril Islands, along with a handful of single missions set in locations around the world.

You take the role of the supreme commander of your chosen fleet. Individual ship captains have direct control of their vessels, so they will act with textbook military precision (otherwise known as excellent AI) when you're not looking. Under

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Sonalysts/Jane's
PUBLISHER → EA
RELEASE DATE → Spring '99
3D SUPPORT → Glide, D3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED   EXCITED   AROUSED

THE HYPE

Realtime strategy has never been so real, with technical wizardry set to mock up all sorts of naval conflicts.

THE HURDLE

Making the intensity of modern naval combat accessible while balancing the anal realism is fraught with potholes.

THE HIT

RTS games are hot, and *Fleet Command* brings a more accessible skew to the familiar tank rushes of the current crop

As dawn breaks in the background, this ship is heading to the bottom.

66

Planes use realistic tactics to avoid radar in their attack runs...

...but unless it's a carefully coordinated attack, they may not live to tell the tale.

Although it's an RTS, Jane's hasn't skimped on the graphical look, with incredibly detailed units. Likewise, audio cues are being used to great effect.

your command can be small frigates, giant cruisers, and mammoth aircraft carriers. That's a damn lot of taxpayer's money to be throwing willy-nilly at upstart foreign powers.

FIVE QUESTIONS

HOITY-TOITY, SMARTY-PANT DEVELOPERS THOUGHT THAT OUR FIVE QUESTIONS WEREN'T RELEVANT. YOU DECIDE FOR YOURSELF.

Q: How many people on the project have had active Naval service?
PCXL On Why They Didn't Answer: This was a shockingly relevant question considering the developers are creating a frickin' naval combat game. Not relevent my ass!

Q: What is the team count for a project this size (include researchers, programmers, artists, etc.)?
PCXL On Why They Didn't Answer: Maybe we were getting too personal, or perhaps they can't count.

Q: How many pierced navels among team members?
PCXL On Why They Didn't Answer: Okay this was irrelevant, but you want to know the answer, don't you? I know we do.

Q: If WWIII breaks out on the great seas tomorrow who wins?
PCXL On Why They Didn't Answer: They could have told us, but they would have had to kill us.

Q: What kind of tactics is a C&C-style "tank rusher" going to have to use in Fleet Command?
PCXL On Why They Didn't Answer: Maybe they have never played a REAL game in their lives.

Fleet Command's appeal comes from your global view of what's going on in any of the missions. A four-window screen has one main view for either the 2D map, which is essentially your battlefield, or the more action-focused 3D view, which supplies incredibly detailed displays of the ships, planes, and submarines as they move, fire, sink, or swim. The other windows show detailed data on the ship, missile, plane, or whatever you have highlighted on the map, and there's also room for a small overview map showing the entire region.

To ease newbies into what is going to be a difficult learning cycle, the standard military symbols for ships can be replaced with simple icons (so, for instance, ships look like ships). This kind of touch is important since the main thing to emerge from this early build is its complexity, both of units (these are well-armed, well-manned pieces of kit that need to be treated nicely) and of tactics (there's no tank rushes or simple resource-building strategies). The four-pronged training missions, complete with audio voice-overs, still need work to make the game accessible even to well-versed RTS gamers.

Rotating the view around the 3D-modeled ships and submarines lets you get up close to the action — and that includes getting close to the explosions, missile launches, and wake trails left by torpedoes. While initially confusing (an extensive manual will be needed to explain the controls, which seem to require every keyboard key — twice), the action really got pumping as the Indian navy began attacking my ships. All of a sudden I was in a real battle — I had no barracks to call reinforcements from or units to build. I had what was there, and if that wasn't enough, well, just chalk it up to another loss for the British. Thankfully a replay button allowed me to right some of these heinous wrongs.

Fleet Command has some way to go in accessibility. But if Jane's manages to get that right, this kind of realistic simulation in a popular genre is on an upswing (*Rainbow Six* for example), and *Fleet Command* could grab a huge chunk of the resource collecting RTS gamers.

— ROB SMITH *typed novel instead of novel too many times to remember — what would Freud think of this?*

The Ticonderoga-class cruiser and other realistic naval units are the key to Fleet Command.

HISTOGRAM

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8	
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PAST STUDIOS

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

In the last few issues you've heard plenty about the pairing of startup Digital Anvil and industry giant Microsoft. *Loose Cannon* is the third game from this collaboration and is definitely the biggest departure for the Roberts brothers' new company. After all, there are no spaceships, or cameos from Mark Hamill (thank god).

Loose Cannon

In the future, the White House don't mean shit. Oh, wait a minute ...

When his contract was up with Origin in 1996, Chris Roberts, the brainchild behind the mega-successful *Wing Commander* series, left to form a new software development studio, dubbed Digital Anvil. Of course, we nosy folks in the gaming biz knew it'd be pumping out space games (later unveiled as *Starlancer* and *Conquest*), but a car combat game and first-person shooter mixed together? What gives?

Loose Cannon is an action/ adventure game set roughly 20 years in the future. After the Middle East gas wars, the entire planet experiences an unprecedented economic collapse. Organized crime runs rampant in the U.S., so Congress legalizes the use of bounty hunters in an act of sheer desperation. This is where you come in (you manly man, you).

You play a bad-ass mercenary by the name of Ashe, and work either in a car or on foot, much as you do in Accolade's *Redline* and Interplay's *Interstate 82*. There are more than a dozen cars to choose from; if you have enough greenback, you can customize them with impressively destructive weapons and other handy upgrades. You must leave your car at times, or

The movements of the characters look incredibly smooth.

you may be forced out, so combat on foot is just as important as combat behind the wheel. Action is viewed from a third-person perspective, or first-person in sniper mode.

In addition to the 20-plus mandatory missions, there are dozens of optional side missions

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Digital Anvil
PUBLISHER →	Microsoft
RELEASE DATE →	Fall '99
API SUPPORT →	TBD

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED · EXCITED · AROUSED

THE HYPE

A unique blend of vehicular combat and on-foot action that is truly different from the gameplay you'll find anywhere else.

THE HURDLE

Interstate 82 and *Redline* are going to be in the market first with similar concepts, and the design could be too ambitious.

THE HIT

If the game's world is half as open-ended and immersive as planned, *Loose Cannon* could create a new genre.

The player must hop on freeways to get to other cities, including San Francisco, New York, and L.A.

FIVE QUESTIONS

TONY ZUROVEC, PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR FOR *LOOSE CANNON*, RESPONDED TO OUR INTREPID FIVE QUESTIONS WITH THE WORDINESS OF STEPHEN KING. SO WE CUT IT (DAMN WE'RE SNEAKY).

Q: What's the inspiration for *Loose Cannon*?

A: Somewhere around 1984 or 1985, I played a computer game called *Autoduel*. I really liked the basic concept, but the implementation was pretty weak. It's stuck in my head ever since, and I've always wanted to take the basic concept and do a state-of-the-art implementation — gameplay, graphics, story, etc.

Q: What is the absolutely coolest feature of all? Don't hold back, now.

A: The blending of vehicular and on-foot action. There will be many instances where a full-out frontal assault in your car will most likely get you killed, especially when you're attempting to infiltrate some of the game's criminal strongholds. A lot of times, stealth will be much more effective, and the game provides sniper scopes, silencers, and a wide variety of other devices to aid you in your more clandestine activities.

Q: The story seems similar to Activision's *Interstate '76* (gas wars, bounty hunters, etc.). Was this a conscious decision?

A: I don't think the stories are very similar, other than the fact that both have bounty hunters and both have cars. *Loose Cannon* doesn't focus on a gas war, but rather on the government's impending insolvency and the results of the actions it took to avoid that scenario. We've tried to realistically portray a dark, gritty world that's gone to hell in the near future because the government had to drastically cut back on most of the federal bureaucracies.

Q: Will there be any special add-ons or downloads from the Net? New cars? Tracks? A level editor?

A: A level editor is unlikely given the complexity of construction. There could possibly be additional multiplayer functionality added after the fact.

Q: Is there any "road rage" in Austin?

A: Well, let's just say that in the course of driving on Austin's highways, I've found myself wishing for a rocket launcher on more than one occasion.

Shhh! Be vewy, vewy quiet. Stealth is also a big part of the game.

related to the overall story, and even more quick jobs to raise some extra coin. (Hey, if you need to fix your car up or you're craving a brand-spankin' new weapon, what else ya gonna do? Get a job at Burger King?) Your main goal, though, is to catch Bishop, the villainous leader of the most powerful crime syndicate in the country.

Missions include assassinations, reconnaissance, hostage rescues, and the like. In one assignment, for example, you must steal a truck carrying powerful weaponry from deep within an enemy base. Once you arrive outside the enemy's HQ, you must make a number of choices. Should

you get out of your car and use the silencer to flatten all the bad guys' wheels so they can't chase you? Peg off all the guards? Plant mines around the base for the getaway? Or simply crash through the front gate and try your luck at blitzing the joint? If the opponent AI can make these type of scenarios believable and flexible, then *Loose Cannon* will perhaps be the best thing to come out of the newly formed Digital Anvil.

Loose Cannon also offers a number of multiplayer options for combat with real human opponents, and will support four to six players over the Internet or eight over a LAN. One idea for

OTHER LOOSE CANNONS

This collection of celebrity misfits is just a sampling of the loose cannons roaming the streets of Los Angeles.

ROBERT DOWNEY JR.→ The downand-out actor has been in court more than most NBA players. Whether he's hopped up on heroin, armed and dangerous, or just sleeping (i.e., passing out) in other people's houses, this actor is out of control

DYAN CANNON→ The aging actress never misses a Lakers game and rumor has it she is one of the "loosest" cannons in Hollywood, if you get our drift

ANYONE WHO STARRED IN "DIFF'RENT STROKES"→ Dana Plato robbed a liquor store, Todd Bridges dealt drugs, and Gary Coleman slaps up bus drivers. This motley crew has a longer rap sheet than the Gambini family. It does put to rest the notion that "different strokes rule the world"

DENNIS RODMAN→ The tattooed power forward has spent the off season liquored up and marrying serpent Carmen Electra — then getting the whole thing annulled. Stunts like this make his other profession, the WWF, seem pretty damn believable

deathmatch mode is to give everyone $50,000 to buy cars and weapons and then leave them to go at it. Unfortunately, there will be no cooperative multiplayer modes.

The early version we saw was buggy, and the graphics were average at best; however, the premise sounds interesting. Let's just hope the team can pull it off.

— *MARC SALTZMAN is quite a loose cannon himself, so don't get him mad — there's no telling what a 5-foot-5 Canadian can do.*

This was the scene outside a local doughnut shop at approximately 8 a.m.

www.xgr.com   PC ACCELERATOR   February 1998
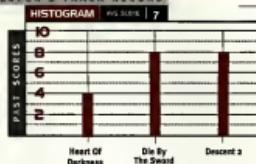
Descent 3

Back for another round of nausea inducing combat, is this a good thing?

Some time in the years between *Descent 2*'s release and today, it pretty much became assumed that there was gonna be a third installment. And yeah, here it is. You don't let a successful franchise like *Descent* collect dust for too long. Given the time since the last one, you've got to think that Outrage (formerly Parallax) has to feel some pressure here, especially on the heels of the excellent *Forsaken*, which in many gamers' minds might as well have been *Descent 3*. So basically, *Descent 3* has to pretty much be *Descent 4*, while still being *Descent 3*. And even if it isn't *Descent 4*, that will like, be the expectation. Still with me here?

Is it going to be up to this leapfrogging feat? Well, the core gameplay hasn't been changed one iota (I am assured that iota is actually a word), with the thinking

that it's a solid foundation to build on. This is true; a first-person 3D shooter that actually utilized all three axis of movement equally was a simple but innovative idea (that flight sims had been doing since... oh well). So depending on whether you loved or hated the gameplay, this should pretty much shape your perception. *Descent 3* is focusing on two things, technology and level design.

The new engine is certainly a giant leap over *Descent 2*, which was about as far behind in 3D engine years as (insert funny analogy here). *Descent 4* – er, 3's engine has all them 3D engine buzzwords, and suffice to say it looks pretty good. Changes include new outdoor environments, which are actually rendered by a whole different engine but you couldn't tell, the transitions between the two are seam-

less. Emerging into an outdoor area after spending your days navigating twisting, cramped corridors is surprising and welcome.

Also, the level design seems faithful to the philosophy of its two predecessors, that is, keep the player off balance, and never let them know which way is up. As

heavy on claustrophobic atmosphere as before, these levels show some good attention to detail. But there's plenty more variety in the settings, "A factory level, for example, has a completely different look, sound, and feel from a military level," says Outrage's president Matt

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Outrage
PUBLISHER → Tantrum/Interplay
RELEASE DATE → March '99
3D SUPPORT → Direct 3D, Glide, OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE

DISINTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

Rabid fans and the need to top 3D gameplay should benefit from the newest, accelerated video cards.

THE HURDLE

Forsaken was for all practical purposes *Descent 3* already, so the question remains IS this real sequel is too late?

THE HIT

If those *Descent* fans are still as enthusiastic, then *Descent 3* should have no difficulty becoming a bestseller.

This game's really great! Check out the way you can turn 360 degrees while doing a double somersault....rrraaaaallppphhh

Sorry 'bout that, that was pretty gross. OK, like I was saying, you can pull off some crazy-ass maneuvers in this game. Check this one out, it's a 720 barrel roll into a flat spin ... hhhuuuuurrrrrrlllllllll!

FIVE QUESTIONS

MATT TOSCHLOG ANSWERS A BUNCH OF QUESTIONS. WE TAKE THE BEST FIVE, THAT'S HOW IT WORKS.

Q. Which TV show would you most like to see a lost season of episodes from when that show was at its prime?
A. The "Tonight Show with Steve Allen," though a whole season would be a lot of shows.

Q. Give us a good analogy for making a computer game like Descent 3.
A. I don't think there is one. Making a game is such a weird mix of research and implementation. I guess maybe it's like fifteen people all writing a novel together, except that they have to invent half the language as they're doing it.

Q. Your best explanation for the evolutionary purpose of eyebrows:
A. I've always assumed that eyebrows are to keep sweat from dripping into your eyes.

Q. Were there any real cases of people getting motion sickness while playing previous Descent games?
A. All the time, even in the office. If we make even a small change in how the ship flies, everyone feels sick for a day or two until they're used to it.

Q. Why are so many games based on science fiction?
A. Because geeks like science fiction and geeks like computers. As computers are used by a broader spectrum of people, though, games will reflect that — look how popular sports games are now.

Toschlog: "We've also made the levels a lot bigger in order to accommodate more in-depth involvement with the environment." The monsters and weapons of Descent have pretty much made the transition wholesale, with robots again being the bad-guy du jour, albeit much more detailed, and the weapons range from lasers to missiles and a napalm flamethrower.

One thing that hasn't aged well is the molasses-slow Descent control – well it seems that way compared to the quick Quake II-like response people have grown used to. Because you're controlling a ship instead of a person, this makes sense but doesn't seem to help the game any. More responsiveness is something that could definitely be called for, particularly in multiplayer.

The Descent name has earned a lot of goodwill with gamers, and Interplay is counting that their craving for a new fix of their favorite gaming drug hasn't deteriorated over the time since Descent 2. It's got enough to make a strong case for being a true Descent sequel – but that should be a given, shouldn't it? ▶

-ED LEE actually gat motion sickness writing this preview, or wos he just sloppy drunk, again?

Oh geez, sorry 'bout that one too – send me the bill for that shirt, OK?

Anyone notice how expensive Legos are these days? Sheesh

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM

DeathDrone

MechWarrior 3

The giant robot game seven out of ten preferred in a blind taste test

Rhetorical question: How many giant robots blowing stuff up in a game is too much? The answer of course, is that's like impossible, innit. Fans of the MechWarrior series of games will readily agree with me. "At its core,

the game is about driving a big robot and blowing stuff up," confirms MechWarrior 3's producer, Michael Mancuso. His company, Zipper Interactive, was surprisingly handed the reins to this hugely important and successful franchise largely because of the

nifty 3D engine their company has been developing for a while now.

Looking pretty incredible in software mode, the engine puts out some serious power on the screen with or without 3D acceleration. Deformable terrain will help you feel the might of the mechs. How this graphics engine is put to use is in the creation of some cool gameplay moments, according to Mancuso. "You and your lancemates are walking down a valley just after sun down, trying to get to a large cache of salvageable material, when the Clan Star that has been tracking you decide to come up over the hill and attack. The flashes of cannon, laser beams and the fiery, explosive death of your enemies, and maybe

your friends, has an almost awesome beauty. 'It Is good that war is so terrible, else we would grow too fond of it.'" Waxin' poetic on the MW3 kick.

One thing that has perhaps prevented the Mechwarrior series from being even more popular is its complexity, or at least its perceived complexity. It's one of these keyboard/joystick recommended setups, with a constant and frantic series of button pressing. At least, any added complexity has been kept to a minimum, and Mancuso expects MW2 vets to be up and running within a few minutes. He cryptically adds, "However, it will be as if they've been half blind and suddenly got their sight back."

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER → Microprose
RELEASE DATE → Q2 '99
3D SUPPORT → Glide, Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED   EXCITED   AROUSED

THE HYPE

It's got what all those other giant robot games don't have: The big name and the big following.

THE HURDLE

Getting more people outside of giant robot geeks to try this out has never really been accomplished.

THE HIT

License + sweet engine = "Is it done yet?" We're ready, primed and waiting for some big mech action.

As dawn breaks over the terrorist compound, the A-Team attacks.

"Get a load of this walking armored tractor, suckas!"

Oh no, it's Mr T in a giant robot! Run before he throws us hella far!

The basic premise for those new to this series is that in a post-apocalyptic future, clans of warriors in giant robots are battling for territory and various ideological causes ('cause it's there). A code of honor among these Mech-Warriors is a throwback to the rules of conduct in war, you know, back in the day of knights and such. So you've got all this cool righteous cause stuff combined with the immense thrill of reducing a 100 ton mech into a pile of

molten slag after an intense all-out firefight – a nice bonus. As a member of a small band of mechs up against overwhelming odds, you've got to somehow find a way to survive in a hostile situation while building up your supplies and armaments to eventually take on the powerful Smoke Jaguar clan. This idea of limited supplies and upgrading adds a great deal of strategy to the single-player campaign and was successfully pulled off in *MW2: Mercenaries*. "Between missions, your Mobile Field Base gathers salvage from the field," explains Mancuso. "You then jump into the Mech Lab to see what you have gathered, and

try to improve on the firepower and capabilities of your mechs, or maybe even to switch to a bigger and better mech whose previous owner no longer has a use for it."

In addition to the robust single-player mode, the multiplayer game has got what is becoming the genre standard: head to head, internet, and LAN with both adversarial and cooperative modes – an area the last *MW* games suffered despite attempts to make it playable. And lastly, the obsessively detailed FASA license is a big bonus for anyone who likes their giant robot games with a lot of story and atmosphere. There's enough material in this world to

last for a thousand games, though hopefully it won't come to that. Don't wanna be thinking about *MWiooo*, I'll settle for playing the third installment.

—ED LEE *has been designated "Official PCXL Giant Robot boy," presumably.*

FIVE QUESTIONS

MICHAEL MANCUSO WAS SOMEWHAT ALARMED AT THE RANDOMNESS OF OUR FIVE QUESTIONS, BUT ANSWERED 'EM ANYWAY.

Q: Where's the best place to buy a Mech around these parts?
A: Your local hobby shop. Ral Partha has some excellent models.

Q: You're walking around in a Mech. Whoops, you "accidentally" step on somebody's house. Whose?
A: Gumby.

Q: Give us a good analogy for making a computer game like Mech 3.
A: Have you ever raised a child from birth?

Q: In your opinion, did the show Frag-gle Rock live up to its potential?
A: Absolutely. This show changed my life. I used to be a complete nerd and only play computer games.

Q: Why are so many games based on sci-fi?
A: You mean they're not about real life? I'm shocked, shocked I tell you.

The A-Team was victorius, but other clans remained to be whupped in the name of freedom.

75

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PAST SCORES

Mike Piazza's Strike Zone (N64) | Tides of War (PC)

Hired Guns

A first-person shooter with a quad personality

High above the town of Boulder, Colo., there protrudes a small pillar of rock known to the inhabitants as Devil's Thumb. Some say the formation is more phallic than thumblike, but that possibility didn't deter a local development group from taking the name for its company. And the name apparently fits: Devil's Thumb is working on a promising game called *Hired Guns* that has a genuine chance of sticking out above crowd.

Everyone on the *Hired Guns* team knows the first-person shooter market is full of "me too" games that bring little, if anything, new to the table. "We all agreed we wouldn't take on this category unless we'd be doing something different, and that's exactly what we think we have here," says Tony Harman, president of Devil's Thumb.

Well, we've all heard those lofty words before. But PCXL scored the first-ever inside look at *Hired Guns*, and, after a full day of seeing just about everything this potentially massive game has to offer, we're inclined to agree that Devil's Thumb has something special on its hands (so to speak).

Hired Guns is being built with Epic Megagame's *Unreal* engine. That isn't unusual, but the fact that the game will feature up to four simultaneous viewpoints certainly is (although Microprose's *X-COM Alliance*, previewed in the shooter market is full of "me too" games that bring little, if anything, new to the table.

FIVE QUESTIONS

DEVIL'S THUMB PRESIDENT AND ALL-AROUND GOOD GUY TONY HARMAN SAT IN THE HOT SEAT AND — BELIEVE IT OR NOT — SURVIVED THE GRILLING KNOWN AS THE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Has anyone at the company ever hired a hit man?
A: Due to current criminal investigations, we can't answer this one.

Q: Who would you most like to rub out today?
A: Ally McBeal.

Q: Who at Devil's Thumb would make the best hit man?
A: That would be Farris, as he's an ex–Army ranger and he likes all that killing stuff.

Q: From which game do you draw the most gameplay inspiration?
A: *Quake II* capture the flag! (Blue Team forever!)

Q: What do the team members like to do outside the office (assuming they actually get outside the office)?
A: We drink and play pool at Quinn's Pool Hall. They even take messages for our guys there, and we have our Christmas party there as well.

INFO BOX

INFO BOX	
DEVELOPER →	Devil's Thumb
PUBLISHER →	Psygnosis
RELEASE DATE →	May/June '99
API SUPPORT →	Glide, Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE

SUSPECT | WARM GOOD | GOD-LIKE

THE HYPE

Has cult following from original *Hired Guns* on the Amiga (which was a huge hit in the U.K.), and the *Unreal* engine.

THE HURDLE

Name known mostly in the U.K. A slick interface. AI- and frame rate are critical to success. Multiplayer still buggy.

THE HIT

Team play is hot right now in multiplayer circles, and the single-player game should have extraordinary depth.

With all those effects in four windows at once, we suspect you'll need a beefy machine to truly enjoy *Hired Guns*.

11

You can see what everyone's doing at all times — even in the heat of battle. This means four times the carnage.

January '99 issue, also uses multiple viewpoints).

With a quad-screen view of the action, you control four mercenaries embroiled in a war among three ruthless corporations in the Luyten planetary system. You start the game playing as Kircher — a grizzled combat veteran who takes exception to the corporations' use of Earth colonists as slaves — and you recruit the aid of three additional mercenaries (Rorian, Osverger, and Myriel) for your rebellious cause as you progress. Each mercenary has his own unique skills, weaknesses, and personality — and you must keep all your recruits alive for the best chance at winning.

You can view and control all four characters simultaneously (without adding any fingers). And you can easily jump to a full-screen view of a single character who performs a specific vital action. Myriel, for instance, con-

The now-obligatory colored lighting makes killing people a heck of a lot prettier.

torts her body to fit into small places no other team member can go (mmm...flexible). You'll also need to know when and how to split up the team members, coordinate their actions, and bring them back together at the proper time and place. This alone should provide unique and challenging gameplay.

It's also a challenge to the *Hired Guns* team: It is no easy task to develop an interface that lets you control each team member at the same time, on the fly, in a fast-paced shooter environment. However, the interface we saw (in the late alpha stage) seemed to be on track. Switching among the characters couldn't be

simpler, and you give orders to the team or individual members with just one or two mouse clicks.

A small window in the upper right of the main game screen holds 13 prerecorded orders — including snipe, lead, follow, patrol, cover, rally, and fury — that you can assign to each mercenary; you can also add five of

You'll shoot this guy just because of his ridiculous attire.

your own macros. Click on the "Everyone" command, and everyone will respond to the order. It promises to be that easy.

This simplicity will be absolutely key to your enjoyment of the game because the 18 single-player levels are some of the largest I've seen. Some take 45 minutes just to traverse on foot, and that's when you know where you're going and no one is shooting at you. The levels will be filled with baddies, and some devious puzzles as well. There will be 35-plus enemies (many will look the same but have different attributes — heavy and light foot soldiers, for instance), and many of the puzzles will need to be solved by multiple team members. For example, one puzzle requires that you activate two keys at once that are too far apart for one person to reach — so you'll need to coordinate two of your mercs to pull it off. At the same time, you'll have to position the other two to supply covering fire should the enemy try to interfere.

The AI of your squadmates is also crucial to Hired Guns' success. You may be able to see what each merc is doing, but of course you can't always control them all at once. And it looks like your mates will be able to hold their own while on their own. The mercs will fight back if attacked, and they will watch your back as well. But be forewarned, the enemies use the same AI as your mercs, so they'll do all the same things — retreat, ambush, take cover, and so on. And a former Army Ranger is coding the AI, so expect to encounter some pretty realistic tactics.

This guy picked a bad day to walk into a first-person shooter.

Hired Guns won't be as pretty as Unreal. With four viewpoints, the polygon counts must be lower to keep the frame rate high. Characters, weapons, and game scenes will have roughly half the poly counts of Unreal, less even than Quake II. This is not to say that the game doesn't look good; it does. The levels are bright, unusual, and varied in their look and design, and not a texture is repeated from one level to the next. And yes, there's lots and lots of blood with which to deck the halls.

So far, 16 weapons supply the carnage, each with up to three modes of fire. The grenade launcher, for instance, will include standard, nuclear, and biological fire modes (each potentially more deadly than the last). There's also the now-obligatory sniper rifle with a 54X zoom that will compensate for

enemies' side-to-side movements — that is, your target's lateral movements will be in concert with the magnification of the scope. The electric hacksaw has some enormous multiplayer potential and produces a satisfying sound when saw meets flesh. There's also a force launcher that will discharge a protective force field to ward off enemy fire, block a passageway, or provide a clever means to walk on water or bridge a chasm. Weapons will also take damage as you fight, which may cause a disastrous misfire if you're not careful. This type of depth and unique gameplay is what makes Hired Guns a promising title.

The weapon-damage feature will be fun in multiplay — you can leave a defective weapon for an unsuspecting foe to pick up. Twenty-eight multiplayer levels are planned for the final game,

with support for LAN and Internet play for up to eight players. The tactical and strategic team-play possibilities have our interest piqued, to say the least. Hired Guns is on track to be much more than just an Unreal total conversion, and for that we are quite happy.

— STEVE KLETT's four personalities can't wait to get their hands on Hired Guns.

Hired Guns is different because of its unique team-play and strategy elements. However, there is still plenty of face-to-face killing that needs doing.

79

Braveheart

Fighting against those oppressive English pig-dogs (cough, spit)
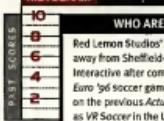
WHO ARE THEY?

Red Lemon Studios' core staff broke away from Sheffield-based Gremlin Interactive after completing the Euro '96 soccer game, having worked on the previous Actua titles (known as VR Soccer in the U.S.). Red Lemon's staff of 15 is now working on Braveheart and another PC title called Aeronauts.

The 13th and 14th centuries were not a good time to be hanging around Scotland, watching history unfold, if you were something of a sissy boy. Despite the quite obviously questionable practice of wearing skirts (a.k.a. kilts) as everyday dress, Scotsmen were a fearsome bunch. In the wilds of wee bonny Scotland, the harsh conditions bred men of iron who had a

staggering antipathy to the English. As impossible to comprehend as that is, it's true. Hence the rebellions led by the likes of William Wallace, an amazing character brought to celluloid life by a brazen, painted Mel Gibson in the 1995 movie Braveheart.

Braveheart, the game, aims to bring the essence of that violent era to life in a realtime strategy game that blends the mass combat of highland battles with

resource, community, and diplomatic management. To put it into a convenient pigeonhole, consider it Myth meets Civilization.

Braveheart began life two years ago as a stand-alone game titled Tartan Army (referring to the popular name given to Scottish soccer fans as they re-enacted their medieval

rebellions in the '60s and '70s watching a soccer game). When the game was picked up by Eidos, the Braveheart license was available. It was a perfect match and a marketing coup.

Starting as boss of one of 16 clans on a satellite-data-correct map of Scotland, you have two basic goals. Either take out any clan in your way or join together and travel south to London.

Respected expert Seoras Wallace (battle choreographer for the Braveheart movie and descendant of William Wallace) has conducted research within this framework. He's pieced together information to cover 168 authentic clans, and the use of their revered tartans and crests has been approved for the game.

Battles are going to be main meat. The rotating 3D world is based on a proprietary engine capable of displaying around 700 uniquely detailed clansmen

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Red Lemon Studios
PUBLISHER →	Eidos Interactive
RELEASE DATE →	Spring '99
API SUPPORT →	Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED · EXCITED · AROUSED

THE HYPE

The Braveheart license and Mel Gibson pulling power should make this game get noticed by more than just the hardcore.

THE HURDLE

Are Myth-style action/strategy gamers really interested in involving themselves in the feudal politics of feudal Scotland?

THE HIT

With the backing of a strong resource-management model, Braveheart is one of the most promising titles on the way.

The 3D engine allows for a close look at men in skirts doing battle.

FIVE QUESTIONS

ANDY CAMPBELL, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF RED LEMON STUDIOS, DECIDED TO ENSURE THAT AN ENGLISHMAN WRITING THIS PREVIEW DIDN'T GET AWAY WITH TOO MUCH SCOTS-BASHING.

Q: How much English-bashing stuff have you had to take out of the game so far?

A: Having been "bashed" for centuries by the English, it's only right that we should have a shot now and again. So in true Hollywood style, the little, oppressed nation gets a chance to nip at the heels of and eventually bite the head off the big, aggressive nation (especially while they're off in France doing some war thing). It's a hard slog to be crowned King of the Scots. Once that little obstacle is out the way, then it's "English, meet Mr. Tartan Fist!"

Q: And how much are you going to be able to leave in?

A: Plenty.

Q: What's the game effect of setting your kilt-wearing troops to pull a mass moon?

A: One of the Scot's greatest weapons throughout history has been his ability to utterly mock his enemy. The kilted moon has been a proven and tested technique. Of course, being able to run fast helps as well. Although we shouldn't be talking about that — we have to keep some secrets for the player to discover.

Q: What's going to be the balance between the seeming mass fun of the crazy battles and the more cerebral challenges of resource management and diplomacy?

A: This really is a big aspect of the game that we think will make Braveheart different, it does have a really in-depth management system, with all the clans interacting with each other on a day-to-day basis. As the player's dominion grows and his scouts and spies are deployed to survey surrounding land, he begins to see the bigger picture: interclan feuds, shaky alliances, caravan ambushes, town raids, dominant clans pressing their intentions on their weaker neighbors and, of course, the incessant English assaults.

The fuel for his military objectives takes the form of his town's ability to grow and generate wealth. The player can manage the minutest detail of his resources, from selecting the food type to produce for his people (they might be sick of eating haggis) to sending supplies to his surrounding towns (they might be sick of eating haggis too). For the non-anoraks, you can slap this on automanage and it takes care of itself, leaving you to go off and bruise a few heads.

Q: And, for old times' sake, what do Scotsmen wear under their kilts?

A: Nothing is worn under the kilt. Everything is in perfect working order!

Apparently this man was killed for doing one too many Sean Connery impersonations.

onscreen at once. Buildings and ramshackle crofts dot the landscape and provide cover for troops whose AI uses line of sight to affect their decisions. The conflicts can be swung by the effective use of leaders who emanate a sphere of influence over their clansmen.

Given the possible scale of the battles, the siege of castles is potentially one of the most intriguing options. Castles will be complete with archers and soldiers dropping oil, and you'll need specific battering rams to try to make a breach. Once that's achieved, you take over the castle — but then hope you didn't do too much damage because the task of rebuilding the castle is yours.

The other half of the game involves resource management. Your duties include raising communities, building defenses, creating and arming fighters, organizing trade routes, intercepting opposing routes, and playing in a potentially deadly game of diplomacy.

Split into three categories — manual, military, and trade — the resource building can take quite a while, but the interface and AI are designed to let you take as much or as little control as you like. With up to 36 settlements to manage, you are aided by an intuitive slide-bar triangle that lets you vary the number of resources you want to spend on each of the three areas.

"The game is won and lost in the selection and hiring of leaders," commented MD Andy Campbell. Braveheart includes some 70 historically accurate characters, exuding different talents and a range of personal skills.

The key to Braveheart's success is in the way it manages to balance the management and battle elements. I hope that Red Lemon doesn't try to cram in too many options and offer a jack-of-all-genres and master of none. The Easter Egg mooning formation should be fantastic to see in action — and I mean for the animation quality, not for the opportunity to witness a bunch of hairy-arsed jocks showing their wares to the world.

With about five minutes of footage from the movie, Mel Gibson's face plastered on the intro screens, and a concept that almost certainly has more mainstream appeal than the likes of Caesar 3, Braveheart could be introducing a whole new slew of people to English-hating conflict. Hurrah for that!

— ROB SMITH wants to play Braveheart just to have the clans suck and to be constantly defeated by the random marauding English troops.

FAMOUS JOCKS

Thanks to Braveheart, the movie, William Wallace is now a household name. It took us a great deal of time to come up with more Scotsmen of note. Here ya go.

SEAN CONNERY
FAMOUS FOR → Being the best James Bond and the only 60-year-old man lusted after by teenage girls
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCOTLAND →
Now any Scotsman off the street can use Sean Connery impersonations to woo women and cause raucous laughter at social functions

DAISY
FAMOUS FOR → Being cloned, and being the first sheep to appear on the cover of Time
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCOTLAND →
Now that they can clone sheep, no Scotsmen will ever have to spend the night alone again

BILLY CONNOLLY
FAMOUS FOR → Replacing Howard Hessman on the miserable "Head of the Class," then starring in his own miserable sitcom "Billy"
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCOTLAND →
He left

ROBERT ROY
FAMOUS FOR → Being another damn Scottish rebel
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCOTLAND →
The movie finally woke up Americans to the cruel ways of the English and the oppressed history of the Scottish

Running into battle? Or are they all racing for the lone sheep?

REVIEWS

Louder!

We rate our games, like our women, on a scale of 1 to 10 – until now. Our scale was set up to rate games from painfully dismal to great, but we didn't count on *Half-Life*. Rules were meant to be broken, and at PCXL we sure as hell have fun breaking every rule we see. But if we had rated *Half-Life* a mere perfect 10 it would have been unfair to any other game that came along. So what the hell we give it a damn 11. If there is a game that comes out tomorrow which blows away *Half-Life*, then we'll give it a 12. Why? Because we can. Think we should drop drinking? Cut back on the heroin? Have some splainin' to do? Don't agree? Email us at umustbehigh@pcxl.com.

Even breasts can't save *Trespasser*.

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.

Killer game!

SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these games at all costs.

SUICIDE

CRITICAL ADD-ONS >>

Whenever a joystick, soundcard, or other computer accoutrement improves a game, we'll stick a corresponding logo on the review. We include only those devices that make the game better; just being compatible isn't good enough. If you don't see the logo, then that particular add-on doesn't do much for the game.

TILT

3D SOUND

GAMEPAD

MULTIPLAYER

STEERING WHEEL

FORCE FEEDBACK

JOYSTICK

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true feel for any 3D acceleration how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET

1	2	3
No significant difference from software, this game and card do not justify the expenditure	The card provides solid enhancements that make the game more immersive and enjoyable	This is what 3D cards are all about. Every effect is utilized, and the smooth framerate makes a huge gameplay difference

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 – no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards – our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various incidents. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in we won't hold back and won't allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS
Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND
Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH
How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN
The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Half-Life. Still not as good as that sex dream with Heidi Klum and Stephanie Seymour	⑪
A true classic. An excellent game that is well worth the money	⑨
A great game, but may feature a few minor flaws that are easily overlooked	⑧
A good, solid game that lacks the inspiration or vision of a truly great game	⑦
A game that rises above the average due to a hook in style or gameplay	⑥
The definition of mediocrity, this game doesn't commit any major crime other than being ordinary	⑤
A game that doesn't exactly suck, but probably won't hold your interest for long	④
OK, maybe there's an element of redeeming value in this game, but it still sucks	③
Very little of interest, this game is deeply flawed and should be avoided	②
Utter crap – Complete shit – A barrel of bullocks – In other words it sucks really, really bad	①

DEVELOPER → Core Design
PUBLISHER → Eidos
REQUIRED → P133 with 3D acceleration or P166 without, 32MB RAM, 160MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL → PB 233, 32MB RAM, Voodoo 2

Tomb Raider III

The virtual goddess needs a serious facelift

ACCELE-RATED

The first *Tomb Raider* was one of the original reasons to pick up a Voodoo 1 card. Three years later the graphics cards have gone to new heights, while Lara and her adventures have barely moved. The special effects and frame rates are good on almost any card and reasonable system (P200 or higher), but the low polygon counts make the game look very boxy by today's standards.

VOODOO 2		
2		3

VOODOO 1		
2		3

RIVA TNT		
2		3

MATROX G200		
2		3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

Despite its many flaws, the *Tomb Raider* series has always been one of my favorites. The first game gave a feeling of pure adventure that no other game had even approached. The wide-open spaces, ingenious puzzles, and amazing 3D world were a true revelation. When *Tomb Raider II* came out, all I wanted was more *Tomb Raider* with some slightly different tombs to raid. Core delivered exactly that, and absolutely nothing more. But I wasn't disappointed one bit. By the third game, however, I was hoping for a new experience.

TRIII has some new features, like the impressive colored lighting, transparency effects, and a slightly higher polygon count. But underneath this thin veneer of graphical glitz is the same aging engine that many moons ago looked state of the art. Now, compared with games like *Half-Life*, *TRIII* looks like a poor-relation console game and nothing more. The fact that *TRIII* is a multiplatform game is one of the main reasons the PC version isn't sporting a shiny new engine. The developers can't get much more out of the PlayStation; therefore our PC version is watered down to console-level technology. That's just not acceptable.

Lara expresses her feelings about the aging engine.

Lara sports some new outfits (a cat suit, warmer attire for the snow) and rounder breasts (they also appear to be shrinking), and she ventures to new exotic locales (India, Antarctica, London). The same solid game design of the original is intact, yet somehow *TRIII* never delivers any real excitement. It's like watching one of your favorite movies one too many times. You know what is going to happen next. The element of surprise, which was the real key to this series, is completely gone. You know that by pulling a switch you will open a gate, and through the gate you'll have to jump over moving blades. Yadda, yadda, yadda.

In many games, like *Quake*, this would be perfectly acceptable because the excitement isn't in what you do but how you do it. But with *Tomb Raider*'s still-laughable combat (fewer enemies than in *TRII*), still-annoying control, and still-idiotic AI (Core evidently just gave up trying to jimmy anything approaching acceptable AI into its venerable engine), the only excitement comes from unearthing new worlds and

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Some creative screen-grabbing was the highlight of playing *Tomb Raider III*, but we always figured Lara for the "on top" type of girl.
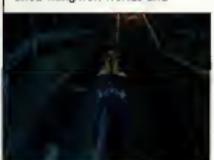
The usual poor AI of enemies is present in *TRIII*, but it's less prevalent because there just aren't very many enemies. Once again the fighting is a big letdown.

THREESOME

The phrase "three times is a charm" didn't apply to *Tomb Raider III*. Here is a look at some other threes, good and bad.

GOOD
INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE
WHY—) Far better than the sucky *Temple of Doom*

BAD
JAWS 3-D
WHY—) The movie that killed the *Jaws* series

GOOD
TABOO III
WHY—) The third and, we think, finest installment in the classic 15-part porno franchise. We just liked the plot much better than *IV* or *XI*

BAD
NEW WAVE HOOKERS III
WHY—) Can't even come close to the drama and intense action of *New Wave Hookers I* and *II*

GOOD
"THREE'S COMPANY"
WHY—) Jack, Chrissy, and Janet provided visual gags and sexual energy you could cut with a knife

BAD
"THREE'S A CROWD"
WHY—) Chrissy and Janet left, as did all the lowbrow humor (not to mention the braless freedom of the late '70s)

variations on the same old puzzles. I could easily forgive Core and Eidos for sticking with the old engine, but the lack of new design or any attempt to improve on areas that everyone knows are lacking is unforgivable. Basically the programming that went into *Tomb Raider III* is the absolute bare minimum. The marketing, however — that's another story.

The floating camera has also

New vehicles and weapons in *Tomb Raider III* are nice, but they were too little too late.

been tweaked, and it seems as if the aim were to provide greater opportunity to look at Lara's curvaceousness front-on. What actually happens is that the nausea-inducing sweeps make it virtually impossible at times to navigate the puzzles. Ledges are visible for a fleeting second and gaps in the terrain are completely hidden — all to let us stare at a polygonal babe's polygonal boobs. C'mon, even with POXL staffers, that's not going to score points.

On it's own, *TRIII* is still a very good game; if I hadn't played the first two *Tomb Raiders*, I would find the third to be one of the best adventure games on any platform. The base game is still a load of fun, and the giant levels offer plenty of exploration. But why should I be punished for being a fan of the series? I wanted to fall

in love with this game all over again and it just didn't happen.

Like the earlier versions, the game is extremely frustrating, to the point where kicking the PC is a viable option, and with the element of surprise now missing all that is left is a frustrating game with a breasty lead character. Frankly I expect more.

— **MIKE SALMON** *will occasionally make his fiancée dress up like Lara Croft and go spelunking*

GRAPHICS
Acceptable a year ago, but by today's standards pretty damn ugly.

SOUND
Same music, same sounds. They were good two years ago. Not any more.

DEPTH
Plenty of play for novices and experts, albeit a bit repetitive.

DEPTH
The original design still rings true, but nothing new has been added.

RATING 5

Pluses
→ Lara Croft
→ Cool smoke effects
→ Lara Croft on her knees

Minuses
→ Horrible cinematics
→ Old problems not fixed
→ Poor camera placement

Tomb Raider drinking game: Drink when Lara says "No" and guzzle a beer for breast shots

Half-Life

The first-person shooter killer app

MULTIPLAYER

3D SOUND

ACCELE-RATED

Half-Life presented a few video card problems, but most of them have been eliminated. For starters, problems have been fixed with Quantum's Obsidian X-24 board (what should be the ideal hardware to run the game; these problems happen to be Mike's excuse for losing in multiplayer, though we don't buy it). A few other issues, including the OpenGL drivers for the G200, are also being addressed. The result is greater clarity among a greater number of cards. And hell, they all look good.
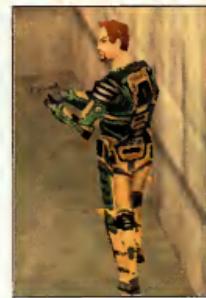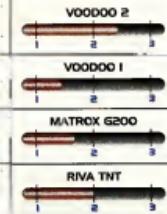
	1	2	3
VOODOO 2			
VOODOO 1			
MATROX G200			
RIVA TNT			

API SUPPORT: D3D, OpenGL

When PCXL gave you the world's first review of Half-Life, we stated that the multiplayer part of the game had yet to be fully implemented. Our review was based on the single-player experience — and what an experience that turned out to be. Now, we're taking a broader look. The full game has hit store shelves, multiplayer servers are springing up all over the place, and it's time to assess the complete Half-Life package.

Essentially, the wheel hasn't been reinvented — it's been given a shiny new paint job, handcrafted with loving precision and tuned to turn perfectly. And there's not one key to find in the entire game. That alone is worthy of a special achievement award.

While we await the Team Fortress package (due in March), Valve has developed an interface to allow incredibly simple connection to internet servers. An excellent one-click Quickstart option is [GOOOOOAAAAAAALLLLLLL] ... searches out a fast, local server and plops you straight into the action. For more control, a limited version of a GameSpy-style server locator is included. This device pings a number of servers (including Sierra's main WON.net) and receives information from them on your connection speed, the maps being played, and the number of players currently blowing each other to smithereens.

Valve shipped eight multiplayer levels, none of which really have

The Egon is better known in the PCXL offices as "The Firehose Of Death" and is easily the favorite up close weapon.

the quality to become a certifiable classic in the vein of Quake's DM4 and Quake II's The Edge, but they're entertaining enough and support varied numbers of players. Getting new levels is simple; the server automatically downloads them to your machine when you log in. In addition, appreciating the difference between what makes a good single-player and a good multiplayer game, Valve has changed some of the weapon effects for multiplay. The Tau Cannon secondary feature now allows even newbies to pull off the rocket jump, and the primary fire of the crossbow acts as a mini-rocket gun.

Other key little features include paint logos to spray around the level, to mark your territory after a kill or just to make pretty designs (if, like Dan, you rarely get kills). The character models of Freeman and the scientists can be customized with a simple slider that changes color combinations. Models and skins will be appearing in abundance on the Internet...

[DAMMIT — THEY SCORED 1–1] ... and we've included a couple of those on our second CD-ROM.

Half-Life's out-of-the-box multiplayer is not spectacular. Performance is decent over the Internet (even occasionally laggy over a LAN) and doesn't make the waves the single-player manages. But the infrastructure is in place — quickstart, autodownloading levels, and so forth — to ensure that it's

incredibly accessible to all gamers. For breathtaking action, incredible settings, story, pace, and pure fun, Half-Life stands as the beacon by which all future games — not just first-person shooters — will be judged. Congrats Valve.

— ROB SMITH honestly believes that Half-Life is worth 11 out of 10.

GRAPHICS
Not Unreal pretty, but variety and art direction are astounding.

SOUND
Killer app for 3D audio, yet still one of the best for good old 3D sound.

DEPTH
It never gets boring — the challenges are varied and immersive.

DESIGN
Quite simply the most well-conceived, expertly paced, and impeccably executed FPS game ever.

RATING 11

+ Pluses
→ Simple Internet log-on
→ User-friendly customization
→ Possibly the best game ever

– Minuses
→ [BUGGER, THEY SCORED AGAIN]
→ [WE SCORED FROM KICK-OFF 2–2]
→ [NOOOO — THEY SCORED! 3–2]

The best part of Half-Life multiplayer has to be the accumulating gore and scorch marks on the levels. Gruesome!

DEVELOPER →	Ratbag Games
PUBLISHER →	GT Interactive
REQUIRED →	P233, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL →	P400 MMX, 64MB RAM, 300MB hard drive, Aureal 3D sound card, force feedback joystick

Powerslide

Slip slidin' away ...

FORCE FEEDBACK

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Even on a measly ol' P200, Powerslide played smooth as butter, with incredible visuals, on a 12MB Voodoo 2. Specific Glide support helps it get the most from the 3Dfx boards, but the better DirectX 3D cards perform admirably as well.

VOODOO 2	● ● ● ●
VOODOO 1	● ● ●
MATROX G200	● ● ●
RIVA TNT	● ● ●
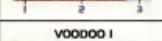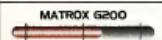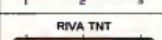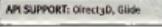
API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

POWER GAMES

POWER NAP
WHO DOES IT → Aging executives or hungover veggie scene
WHAT IT IS → A quick sleep to rejuvenate venomous behavior
HOW TO DEFEAT IT → The old finger on the nose is a classic
HOW IT CAN HELP THE LITTLE GUY → Getting paid to take a nap = Good

POWER TIE
WHO WEARS IT → Mindless herd of financial analysts, lawyers, and CEOs
WHAT IT IS → Constantly changing accessory that is supposed to make you look more important
HOW TO DEFEAT IT → Scissors
HOW IT CAN HELP THE LITTLE GUY → Hanging out in financial district bars at happy hour may score you some gold-digging wench looking to land a career — oh, wo mean, husband

POWER TRIP
WHO DOES IT → Insecure losers in positions of self-esteem boost (a.k.a. managers at Burger King)
WHAT IT IS → Blatant orders like "Get me some coffee, on the double" from people with little or no real power
HOW TO DEFEAT IT → Quit and go to McDonald's. Minimum wage just isn't enough to justify dealing with that shit

I f nothing else, arcade racers just keep getting better and better looking. Even though *DethKarz* isn't cold on the shelf yet, GT Interactive has published another sci-fi racer. Ratbag is the quaint-named developer behind this latest one, called *Powerslide*, and it's an odd racing game to be sure. It also takes the crown for the best-looking driving game on the market — for the moment, anyway.

There's no doubt that this is an entertainingly goofy racer, vaguely in the same vein as Domark's venerable classic, *Big Red Racing*. But you don't really steer in the game so much as you, well, slide — and that's the game's main problem. As a result, it's definitely not going to be everyone's cup of racing tea, but it still has plenty going for it.

First off, the graphics truly rival anything in the arcade sector, with high resolution, incredibly detailed tracks, cars with superhigh polygon counts, and a frame rate that runs through the roof when powered with 3D acceleration. The 10 tracks let you race through deserts, cities, old industrial mine areas, an abandoned dam, and snow-covered wastelands. There's even an incredibly entertaining "luge" course with the mother of all jumps at the finish.

Powerslide offers six cars (plus one hidden car), each with bizarre driver choices to help customize

Hey, anyone up for a little mining?

Finding a parking space in this city is murder.

your playing experience. The music is an interesting mix of industrial tunes with scores that almost seem ripped from *Star Wars*. Sound effects are well done, and the game uses Aureal 3D nicely.

Control includes decent force feedback, and you'll want a stick or steering wheel for this one, since control pads proved terribly unresponsive. Even after getting used to the odd handling of the slip-sliding cars, it's still hard to tell if the physics make sense. Although each car feels a bit different, with varying handling characteristics, all the cars swerve wildly out of control a little too easily. It's as if the game tried for simulation-style physics in an arcade racing world. Cars will spin over, bounce on their roofs, then land back on their wheels and keep going, and if you hit a wall, pinball physics take over until you can regain control.

Either in spite of or partly because of the almost sadistic

physics of the game, *Powerslide* can be extremely entertaining. It plays great over the Net as well, and has a keen lag variation called Fox and Hound, in which you try to stay "it" for as long as possible. With well-designed tracks and stunning graphics, the often infuriating gameplay can be an almost surreally engaging experience. ▶

— **JASON D'APRILE** *now has a crush on Hemp Girl, the sexy eco-chick from* Powerslide.

GRAPHICS
Fast, detailed, and realistic looking, rivaling anything in the arcades.

SOUND
An interesting soundtrack complements excellent sound effects.

DEPTH
Ten tracks, plenty of shortcuts, and excellent play over the Internet.

DESIGN
Excellent track design, superb visual flare, but some obnoxious physics. Great AI as well.

RATING ⑦

+ Pluses
→ Fantastic graphics and audio
→ Wild track design
→ Hemp girl

– Minuses
→ You'll slide more than steer
→ The physics are too strange
→ No weather effects

Bumper sticker: Can you read this? Then you're too *damn* close.

Cyberstrike 2

DEVELOPER →	Simutronics Corp.
PUBLISHER →	989 Studios
REQUIRED →	P166, 32MB RAM, Direct 3D card, 4X CD ROM
IDEAL →	PII 266, 64MB RAM, joystick, 56.6K modem or better

Doin' that Bi-pedal shuffle

ALTERNATIVES

There is a been quite a few mech sims to choose from recently, which says tons that is of which the disk Mechwarrior series, but that is also a recent other mech games worth notice. If you like Cyberstrike, then you might be interested in these games as well.

HEAVY GEAR

Heavy Gear came about after Activision lost the Mechwarrior rights, but was buggy and unsatisfactory. It did, however, have a very cute cable in the FMW sequences.

Rating → 5

SCARAB

Electronic Arts released a game called Scarab, which had a strong kinship to Cyberstrike, since it was designed by the same company and had many of the same, guys and had many of the sim gameplay concerns. It was a really neat game, actually — big robots with an Egyptian god bent, and less. If play on Myplayer, it hit bargain bins right out of the chute, so look for it there.

Rating → 6

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

For a more expansive view of metal carnage, it's hard to beat Total Annihilation, otherwise known as the Cyberpunk "Black" of the. It's world, with about 200 kinds of giant, boxy robots to play with and blow the crap out of.

Rating → 8

I t's only slightly odd that the best big-robot "sim" on the market today is the same one that's been the best for years now — Mechwarrior 2. Activision's Heavy Gear 2 has hit a couple of delays (it now has a proposed February release), but 989 Studios is publishing Simutronics' sequel to the oldest internet-based multiplayer mech game out there in the form of Cyberstrike 2.

It's a disjointed game with a number of commendable aspects. No longer Net-based only, the game provides a complete single-player campaign detailing the saga of control over a dying world from the perspectives of two opposing sides, giving the game a total of about 50 missions. There are cinematic scenes and complete mission briefings as well. Multiplay — which is still where this game's soul remains — is team based, with the combatants forming clans and having outright wars with each other.

The most distinctive aspect of Cyberstrike 2 is definitely the terrain. The game's many landscapes have flowing contours, the jungles are especially impressive, with giant trees, a thick lush canopy above you, and plenty of hills and ravines. There are also cities, industrial factory areas, grassy hillsides, and rugged, bleak deserts. The cyberpods you pilot are quite detailed and well animated, but it's disappointing that the game has really only one type of robot. Options for customizing equipment and weapons supply a

It's a rumble in the desert, with fire all around.

little variety, though.

Another interesting feature is the use of dropships and power towers. Your side's dropship will drop these towers (and other supplies) when you request, if you can afford them. Towers increase the power available to your team's pods, and without them your weapons will be very slow to recharge. Consequently, destroying the enemy's towers is an important strategy — an interesting gimmick.

With all these solid features, Cyberstrike 2 still gets two black marks. The first is the control; its lack of competent configuration options makes finding a setup that feels intuitive and responsive a real problem. The game is virtually unplayable with a mouse. The second problem is the Simutronics internet play — it works well, but buying the game at full retail price only gets you a handicapped shareware version. You have to pay a monthly fee to get all the options, which is utterly ludicrous.

As it is, Cyberstrike 2 might be fun if you can adapt to the controls, but given the perpetual cost of playing online, it's highly questionable whether it's worth the bother. If Net play was free this game would have scored a 7. ◗

— JASON D'APRILE enjoys jumping about with the old of large mechanical devices.

GRAPHICS
Great landscapes, excellent explosions, and solid animation.

SOUND
Decent sound effects, solid voice acting, and appropriate tunes.

DEPTH
Multiplay aspects are in-depth and single-player portion is sizable.

DESIGN
Decent single-player missions of robot destruction. The tower-and-supplies drop adds strategy.

Great lighting and slick textures show off this jungle scene of vehicular destruction.

RATING 6

➕ Pluses
→ Excellent landscapes
→ Lots of missions
→ Team-oriented multiplayer options

➖ Minuses
→ Control is problematic
→ Limited vehicles
→ Paying for full Net options

DEVELOPER → Accolade
PUBLISHER → Accolade
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard drive, D3D accelerator with 4MB graphics card
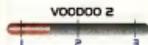IDEAL → PII 266, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2, gamepad

Test Drive 5

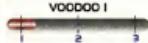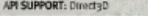## Sick of console ports yet?

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Although *Test Drive 5*'s graphics were definitely created for a console first, a fast D3D accelerator will run the game smoothly, even in the split-screen mode. Voodoo boards also ran the game well.

VOODOO 2		
VOODOO 1		
MATROX G200		
RIVA TNT		

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

TEST-DRIVE TRICKS

Even those of us without the cash to purchase new cars can entertain ourselves at the expense of these disreputable car dealers. Here are a few fun ways.

JOYRIDE
WHAT IT IS→ Being able to take a brand-new BMW for a couple of hours and complete the errands you can't really do on your scooter.
HOW TO DO IT→ Dress up in a suit and have a well-dressed woman come with you to the car lot. Persuade the dealer to let you take the car for a spin so you can talk to your friend privately about it, and, hence, you're picking up that sofa at Monkey Wards.

FREE LUNCH
WHAT IT IS→ Taking advantage of senseless (and sleazy) tactics by car dealers to increase sales.
HOW TO DO IT→ Consistently listen to the radio to find out which dealership has the free hot dogs and soda. Go to the lot and eat until they kick you out.

FREAK OUT SALES GUY
WHAT IT IS→ Having fun with a commission-only salesman.
HOW TO DO IT→ Have fun ride along as you test-drive the car. Peel out of the lot, then immediately throw the car into reverse while saying, "Damn, this car handles like shit." Laugh maniacally as transmission falls to the pavement and salesman cries like a little girl.

ake a deep breath. If you pick up the whiff of cheap console port, then *Test Drive 5* is probably in the vicinity. The PC platform is leaps beyond consoles, so why should PC owners have to play games that are dressed-up versions of titles made for weaker machines? It doesn't make sense.

Test Drive 5 feels as if it were made for the PlayStation. A disappointment for those of us who enjoyed the PC-focused *Need for Speed III*, *Grand Prix Legends*, and even Sierra's *Driver's Education '99* (it's a racer if you play it right), the venerable *Test Drive* series is in danger of losing its reputation as its outer luster cracks to reveal a weak underbody. It may be "simple and fun," but that's just not enough.

First of all, I know how to drive, and I shouldn't have to relearn in order to play a driving game. But playing *TD5* with a steering wheel and pedals is pointless. The command options won't even let you set things up properly for both a brake and a gas pedal. And the

Need for Speed III makes Test Drive 5 look more like a Ford Pinto than the '68 Ford Mustang included in the game.

handling in the 28 licensed cars is anything but realistic; you don't get the differences in feel and touch that the *NFSIII* cars provide.

The graphics have a decidedly console feel too. While the game is 3D accelerated and runs smoothly on most systems, the repetitive textures and boring environments are typical of a PlayStation game. Never are you convinced that you are driving on a real track or even in a great-looking PC racer, despite the weather effects and other extraneous graphical nuggets.

Finally, the game plays like a console crib. The AI makes the leading cars slow so that you can catch up; then they ram you off the road. Also, the wreck physics are atrocious. If you hit another car, you flip in the air like one of the cars hit by the *Independence Day* alien motherships. And if you clip one wall of the track, you immediately bounce across to the other, no matter how well you drive.

In typical arcade fashion there are some big jumps and some great twisting tracks, but it's nothing at all sparkling.

These problems make *Test Drive 5* a truly annoying experience.

On the upside, the soundtrack is good, with more licensed performers (including *KMFDM*, *Gravity Kills*, and *Fear Factory*), and the multiplayer mode is decent (the split-screen mode is a plus), but other than that, this title is best left on the PlayStation.

— **DAN EGGER** *likes console games, but realizes how much better their PC counterports are.*

GRAPHICS
Sure, it's smooth and fast, but it's also pretty dull.

SOUND
The music is decent, but nothing to write home about.

DEPTH
Once you learn the controls you've basically got things figured out.

DESIGN
This is strictly a straightforward port with not much design to speak of.

RATING 4

➕ Pluses
→ Real muscle cars
→ Crazy wrecks
→ Wild jumps

➖ Minuses
→ Cars don't handle realistically
→ The wrecks are not very convincing
→ The control is awful

Kegon Falls

DO SOMETHING MORON!

SEGA

REVIEWS

DEVELOPER → Raven Software
PUBLISHER → Activision
REQUIRED → P166 with 3D acceleration or P200 MMX without, 32MB RAM, 36oMB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL → P8 266, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2

Heretic 2

It's like an elf gone amok!

MULTIPLAYER

3D SOUND

ACCELE-RATED

The best the Quake II engine has looked, and proof that the 3Dfx card isn't quite dead yet.

VOODOO 2			
1	2	3	

VOODOO 1			
1	2	3	

TNT			
1	2	3	

i740			
1	2	3	
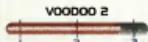
API SUPPORT: Open GL

It seems likely that the main audience for Raven's latest in the Heretic/Hexen series, coincidentally called Heretic 2, will consist of those who like the previous games set in this dark, violent fantasy world. Heretic 2 moves the series out of first person and into a (cough) Tomb Raider-esque third-person perspective, which has completely changed the feel, if not the look. And it's one of the best third-person action games out there.

Heretic 2 mixes intuitive, Quake-style controls with viscerally gory violence, item- and switch-based puzzles, and a continuously developing story. The player takes the role of Corvus, the manliest elf you ever saw, as he returns home from a cursed land after defeating the evil D'sparil in the original Heretic. Things are none too pleasant on the home front: A bizarre plague has ravaged his land and people, turning them into psychopaths and causing them to lay waste to one another. Thus Corvus' quest for a cure begins, made more complicated later when he finds himself infected.

The game weaves a touch-and-go plot as Corvus follows one failed lead after another in his quest to find a cure. He journeys through medieval cities and fortresses, mines, insect hives, underwater temples, and caverns. Using the Quake II engine, the game looks stunning. Level design, like previous Raven efforts, has a splendid sense of grandeur. Add beautiful lighting effects from Corvus' magical attacks, enemy magic, torches, and other level-based illumination, along with some incredibly detailed characters, and it all adds up to a game that is as much fun to look at as it is to play.

For players who liked the control and sense of adventure of Tomb Raider but found the action dull, Heretic 2 should hit the mark. Corvus can roll, climb, leap, grab ledges and pull himself up, swim, and even use his staff to pole-vault across wider gaps. Offensive weapons are not limited to Corvus' blade-edged staff, but include an array of magical spells for fireballs, a fire wall, destructive blue orbs of energy, a powerful shattering spiked ball, and the Thunder Blast. In addition, Corvus

Corvus works in colored lighting like a sailor works in obscenities. In fact we found it difficult to take any screenshot of Heretic II that didn't have some glowing neon effect.

Do you like looking at elf butt? *Heretic II* has plenty of it.

HERETICS

Possible choice for the role of Corvus if there's ever *Heretic: The Movie.* Hey, it could happen!

BRAD PITT →
Exuding his fly, the semi-lack of personality that he showed in *Meet Joe Black,* he could be the perfect, pouty, self — just add pointy ears

LEONARDO DiCAPRIO →
Diminutive features, soft voice, and the comely grin could all be elfish. The only problem is that it's too played him, we'll all be wishing for Corvus to get killed horribly

STEVEN SEAGAL →
Hey, why not? He's thin, pointy features, a gruff but soft-spoken nature, and leaning grin are perfect. And say what you will about his acting skills, the man can kick ass. Not to mention, he's environmentally conscientious, just like Corvus!

finds two kinds of magical arrows for his bow — one creates a furious red lightning storm over the target; the other shoots fiery phoenixlike arrows. He even has his old rapid-fire Hellstaff as a throwback to the original game.

Adding to that are defensive magic spells. Players can create barriers around Corvus, waves of repelling energy, spells that turn opponents into chickens, and even an emergency teleport for a quick escape. Aside from the well-designed single-player game, *Heretic 2*'s Internet play also works great, and with the game's wide array of spells, deathmatching is a hoot. Servers are easy to find through either Kali or GameSpy, and performance is exceptional. Activision even included the development tools on the CD, in case you're sufficiently enthusiastic to get into level editing or making mods.

Heretic 2's CD soundtrack is extremely impressive as well, with a powerful score that matches the dark medieval landscape perfectly. Sound effects are fantastic, especially with Aureal 3D sound cards, which make the audio hang

in the air with a noticeably atmospheric presence.

That's a lot of glowing praise, but the game contains some noticeable flaws. *Heretic 2* has some severe graphic errors — odd visual artifacts and distortions. The camera shakes hideously if you look straight up while on a lift, and the worst problem is that Corvus occasionally gets trapped in doors and elevators; to get him out, players must reload the game or type in "kiwi" from the console to turn clipping off.

Aside from the last, the problems are minor, and the game never crashed or proved otherwise unstable. Also, the camera that follows Corvus is almost always perfectly placed, and it's even adjustable for a higher or lower base angle. While *Heretic 2* isn't likely to light everyone's fire, fans of fast, violent third-person action — and especially of the previous *Heretic* games — will find much to like here.

— **JASON D'APRILE** *does not have pointy ears, although he can't help but notice how close his name is to the evil elf D'sparil's.*

GRAPHICS
Fine weapons, lighting, characters, level design, and wall-to-wall glibs.

SOUND
A sonically awesome game, with a great soundtrack and first-rate effects.

DEPTH
Varied landscapes in 22 levels add body; Net play adds longevity.

DESIGN
Great levels, weapons, and magical effects, with a solid story.

RATING (8)

➕ Pluses
→ Great eye-candy effects
→ Intuitive control
→ Awesome sound

Minuses ➖
→ Graphic glitches
→ Getting stuck in solid objects
→ Corvus' backside just isn't anywhere near as appealing as Lara's

Leonardo DiCaprio once said, "I fear becoming an asshole celebrity" — doh!

DEVELOPER →	Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER →	Electronic Arts
REQUIRED →	P90, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 16-bit graphics card
IDEAL →	P200 MMX, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card, 180 MB hard drive

Future Cop

To serve, protect, and blow their asses sky high

ACCELE-RATED

Bad guys di. bloodier deaths amid swirling flam.s with Voodoo 2. Eminently satisfying. The native Glide support means that Voodoo 2 is the card of choice, but solid Direct3D means that your TNT will do quite nicely as well. The software n.ndsr.r is decent, but Future Cop is st.il served with some sort of acceleration.
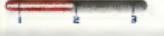
VOODOO 2

VOODOO 1

TNT

G 200

API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

OTHER MECHANICAL COPS

ROBOCOP → Half man, half machine, Robocop wandered mechanically through three films and a TV series, making humming sounds as his gears and levers moved his limbs

SYLVESTER STALLONE → Half man, half beefcake, Stallone wandered woodenly through many *Rambo*, *Rocky*, and sensitive-cop films, making sounds like "Yo!" "No word nightmare," and "Genetics"

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER → Half man, half steroids, Ah-nold wandered vaguely through countless films, making sounds like "Crab da chiwwis" and "Pout opp yr hans"

The X-1A can also transform into a hovercraft, and zap a gun emplacement, viewed from overhead.

Y ou may remember the scene on the TV news. Some heavily armed punks in flak jackets got into a shoot-out a couple of years ago with L.A.'s finest. Networks showed the nasties armed to the teeth, strolling around casually, firing in all directions. The police were so severely outgunned that they had to send runners to nearby gun shops to requisition heavier weapons.

Not this time, dog breath. Electronic Arts' new 3D shooter, *Future Cop: L.A.P.D.*, loads the good guys with state-of-the-art assault vehicles and some massive firepower. Bring on the perps. We'll lob a few Hellfire missiles into their ranks and blow their dirtbag asses to felonious powder.

In futuristic Los Angeles, criminals have overrun the city. Your job is to clean out the thieves, murderers, and drug dealers and return the city to the path of righteousness. There are no namby-pamby rules to hold you back, either. If someone moves, blast him.

To assist you in your sworn duty, the city fathers have put you in a TAC X-1 Alpha, a revolutionary mechanical assault vehicle that can be used either as a walker or as a hovercraft. A velvety-voiced female dispatcher named T.J. Ryder guides you through the hot spots; you're armed with a choice of 15 souped-up weapons ranging from rapid-fire miniguns to dead-eye mortar shells. Keep your eyes open for stashes of power-ups, shield enforcements, and weapon upgrades along the way.

In Crime War, the first of two modes of play, your X-1A invades eight heavily defended cesspool areas, one after another, and fights through armies of criminal foot soldiers, armored vehicles, flying gunships, and pillboxes to get to the crime lords. Aiming is easy — point your X-1A in the right direction, and it targets the nearest enemy. You'll clobber bad

Violent cops in L.A.? And this is supposed to be about *future* cops? I don't get it.

guys in Griffith Park, and work your way through Zuma Beach, the La Brea Tar Pits, Venice Beach, Hell's Gate Prison, Studio City, LAX Spaceport, and the suburb of Long Beach, complete with a berthed *Queen Mary*.

The other mode is Precinct Assault, a kind of capture-the-flag in which you fight through four L.A. districts. Multiplay is stronger here. You can battle the computer (an AI that calls itself Sky Captain and jeers you unmercifully) alone or with a friend, or you can take on a human foe in split-screen action by network, modem, or serial play.

But the real adrenaline pumper in *Future Cop* is the graphics. Designed to take full advantage of your 3Dfx card, the game offers an overhead camera, realtime lighting effects, vertex color, brutal explosions, and bloody pyrotechnics. It's good even without acceleration. The minute you plug in your Voodoo 2, though, dying criminals seem to burn brighter, writhe more agonizingly, and even scream louder.

OK, so playing through *Future Cop* isn't exactly brain surgery. But simple mayhem can be exhilarating, especially when accompanied by the bloody shrieks and fiery death throes of these pixelated scumbags. ➣

— JOHN LEE *has earned his share of traffic tickets from the L.A.P.D.*

GRAPHICS
Intense pyrotechnics make this a good, inexpensive poster kid for 3D.

SOUND
Explosions and screams of dying do wonders for player blood lust.

DEPTH
Multiplay, though restricted to two, gives *Future Cop* added dimension.

DESIGN
Crime-ridden vision of futuristic L.A. offers unexpected vistas, as well as familiar scenes.

RATING ⑦

➕ Pluses
→ Bad guys scream, burn deliciously
→ Strong two-player capabilities
→ At $20 unexpectedly good value

➖ Minuses
→ Rotating camera can leave you blind
→ Single play is repetitive
→ Can't play as bad guys

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity

Resident Medieval

ACCELE-RATED

KQ:MOE (as it's known to its friends) seems designed for software first, with 3D acceleration added as an afterthought. The characters are not particularly well detailed or shaded, and the shadowing effects look fake up-close.

	SLI VOODOO 2		
	VOODOO 2		
	RIVA TNT		
	MATROX G200		

API SUPPORT: Glide, D3D

When the game starts your friends resemble statues, cool huh?

Forget whatever you thought you knew about the *Kings Quest* series in its previous seven games. With *Mask of Eternity*, the rules have changed. Roberta Williams' latest foray in to her pet fantasy world is a first-rate action/adventure that elevates the long virtual history of the Kingdom of Daventry to the realm of a living, breathing 3D world full of detail, mood and ambient life. Despite *Mask of Eternity's* radical new take, the setup is pretty standard fantasy-fare. Horrible forces with even more horrible fashion sense have shattered one magical maskthingum, scattering five pieces of said thingum to the far nooks and butt-crocks of the land, verilee, and, well, you can see where this ox-cart is rolling. For some inexplicable, perilous reason, the entire populace of Daventry has been turned to stone... and that's where you come in, as the lone hero Connor, who must, starting from nothing mere moments after the onset of the curse, set things right.

This pre-game calamity conveniently allows *Mask of Eternity* to open in a familiar yet dramatic setting – oh, it's Daventry, all right, but it's dark, ominous, and filled with monsters now, and haunted by the silent presence of once-lively townfolk turned cold and mute by evil magic. From the first minute of gameplay, there's an ambient tension that can only be described as deliciously creepy. Daventry is blankened in an unnatural nighttime, buildings and terrain features

Connor getting ready to kick some mummy ass.

This portal doesn't take you back to a 2D adventure.

swim up out of the dark mists as you begin to explore. Things come out of the shadows (or sometimes right out of the ground).

Mask of Eternity plays, in its third-person mode, like a greatly expanded *Resident Evil* or *Alone in the Dark* – you maneuver a polygonal Connor around a landscape in a dramatic, cinematic manner – but there's much more here. First, the graphics feature all types of visual niceties like dynamic lighting, creature/object shadows, articulated bodies and even enhancements to your character's wardrobe as he accumulates gauntlets, boots, armor and the like. You'll start the game dressed like Ye Olde Towne Schlube, and end it pimped out like something out of *Excalibur*.

Second, the settings are true 3-D environments, with hills to be ascended, bodies of water to be crossed, buildings to be seamlessly entered and explored, and, of course, enemies to fight in realtime. To these ends, you're not restricted to fixed viewing angles, but have free control of the camera. You can even switch to a firstperson mode, handy when exam-

The added action in *Mask Of Eternity* is a welcome addition, as is the impressive 3D engine.

ining a room or picking off targets at long range with a crossbow. Details are everywhere, from scripted sequences to the use of grappling hooks to such fine touches as the specific epitaphs on tombstones, and *Mask of Eternity* fulfills that highest duty which all games should aspire to: Rewarding the curious. ➡

–CHRIS HUDAK *keeps a sword in his hollow, and is just waiting for someone to try to break in.*

GRAPHICS
Dynamically lit graphics make for mood up your ying-yang.

SOUND
Excellent ambient sounds and context-sensitive music.

DEPTH
A strange bird indeed – mechanically simple, but with lots of detail.

DESIGN
Excepting one or two weirdnesses, solid and impressive – this is not your little sister's *King's Quest*.

RATING 8

➕ Pluses
➔ KQ in 3D with non-cutesy style
➔ Ominous look
➔ Smart camera work

➖ Minuses
➔ Dialogue script is god-awful
➔ No freelook in first-person
➔ Disturbing King Graham nude code

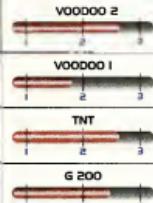# Moto Racer 2

Vroom, baby! Vroom!

MULTIPLAYER

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

There really isn't any noticeable difference between the Voodoo 2 and the TNT in effects, frame rate, or overall graphics performance. So that 2D/3D combo's looking better all the time, isn't it?

VOODOO 2	
VOODOO 1	
TNT	
G 200	

API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

Choose from eight different bikes in both the street and dirt biking competitions.

Everything I needed to know about motorcycle racing I learned from Moto Racer. For instance, the only way to crash a bike Is to pop a wheelie while either hitting the side of the road, even if there's no visible barrier, or hitting the dumb-ass biker in front of you who won't get out of the damn way. Yes, after covering the gamut of motorcycle racing ecstasy known as Moto Racer 2, I am ready to go pro in the real world. After all, a little knowledge is a wonderful thing.

Moto Racer 2, just like the original, mixes street and dirt bike racing in a manner that is instantly accessible to all but the lowest forms of single-celled life. And although I was bitterly disappointed by the total lack of scantily clad chicks either watching or bathing me in glory after a particularly impressive victory, which if not for editorial disgruntlement would have immediately put Moto Racer 2 down several notches in my book, this game is an incredibly fast and fun ride.

Moto Racer 2 isn't a success because of its good looks alone, even if it is pretty sharp. A variety of locales, including desert, urban, forest, and Mayan jungle, all feature D3D- and Glide-accelerated sharpness. There are 32 tracks, divided evenly between dirt and street. The courses are generally well designed, even if they're mainly variations on one another, and there's even a semi-coherent track editor.

But the main reason this game plastered such a devious smile on my face is speed. It's wickedly fast. Most of the tracks blur by in their rapid bump 'n' grind method with enough grand valleys and peaks to make the average "Baywatch" episode pale in comparison. You'll only really catch air on the dirt bike tracks, though, which is disappointing. The camera in the dirt tracks is a bit

funky, moving at alarmingly sharp angles when you're trying to keep up on steep turns. And I really wish that the player's biker had a custom jacket, instead of an outfit correlating with the bike, since the computer bikers often look identical.

Control is excellent, and Moto 2 is impressively playable even at 1,024 x 768 with a Voodoo 2 or TNT card. The computer competition is very stiff, although it does suffer badly from an "elite five" who mysteriously jump ahead of the rest of the pack. There's even a simulation mode, which makes it harder to go fast, thus negating the whole point of an arcade racer. The game offers an array of championship tournaments, and up to four players can compete on one machine via split-screen windows, although you'll need some heavy hardware for it; eight players are supported via network options. Sound effects are nicely done, though the punk-ish music was undistinguished and redundant.

All in all, this is the most entertaining racer I've played since Need for Speed III, and not much else before that rivals it. ▶

— JASON D'APRILE has since learned that "a little knowledge" only gets him hurt. And it certainly doesn't get him any action whatsoever.
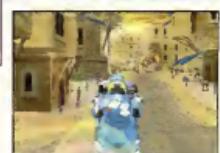
Moto Racer 2 has many of the traditional arcade racer locales.

GRAPHICS
Like the original, only better! Less draw-in, and more-realistic environs.

SOUND
Lots of vrooming noises as expected, but a really disappointing soundtrack.

DEPTH
A track editor, 32 tracks, and 16 bikes give it an impressive girth.

DESIGN
Well-designed tracks challenge many skill levels, and computer opponents are challenging too.

RATING 8

➕ Pluses
→ It's faaaaasst, baby!
→ Great graphics and awesome performance
→ Lots of tracks, track editor

➖ Minuses
→ The music
→ Way too many guys in pink jackets
→ Ahhhh! My thumbs! My thumbs!

DEVELOPER →	Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER →	Ubi Soft
REQUIRED →	P166, 50MB RAM, 35MB hard drive, 5Dx.or Direct 3D accelerator card, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL →	P266, 64MB RAM, 257MB hard drive, 12MB 3D accelerator card

Speed Busters: American Highways

Breakin' the law again and again and *again*

ACCELE-RATED

Specific Glide support makes *Speed Buster's* Voodoo 2-powered mode most impressive, with plenty of details in the environments as well as the cars. Direct3D performance is pretty good, just without some of the bells and whistles.

VOODOO 2 9

VOODOO 1 7

TNT 7

G200 4

API SUPPORT: Glide, Direct 3D

LOST HIGHWAYS

We've put our heads together to think of some other tracks that would in *Speed Busters* seem more exciting. Here ya go:

DEATH ROW
Racing down a path of soon-to-be-gassed prison paths, you must weed inmate-produced projectiles (i.e., *Silence of the Lambs*) and reach the gas chamber first
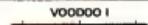
OVAL OFFICE TRACK
Really, the collaboration of circle racing and circle jerking. Finishing first gets the prize, the rest — close but no cigar

PASS THE BRONCO
An add-on to the Los Angeles track would set you on the same L.A. free-way as a fleeing O.J. Simpson. Pass the posse of cops and run the deranged killer off the road, and the whole world will thank you

Lava is bad for tires — this much we know.

The first thing you need to understand about *Speed Busters* — and it's implied in the title, but you can never be too obvious these days — is that it's a racing game. Got that? It's *just* a racing game — oh, sure, the graphics rock, it's got a very satisfying and convincing sense of speed — but that's pretty much it. The hype of *Speed Busters* having an element of "defined strategy" is just lame, sad, and embarrassing. Here's the defined strategy: Time your track laps and choke-point approaches in such a way as to blow by the police radar points at the most lip-gibberingly high speed possible to rack up the moolah. It sounds kinda different at first — until you realize that you're doing the same thing you would do during any arcade racing game.

That said, *Speed Busters* does what other racing games should do more of and, indeed, what *Speed Busters* itself should have done more of: It provides environments that you actually give two craps about. You just don't expect to come slewing around a boxed-in corner and find yourself face-to-feet with a rampaging T-Rex, even in California. Pre relic-littered Mexico circuit, bladed pendulums swoop back and forth across your path, lava glows in the distance, and rocky debris litters the track. And they're not just for looks: Screw with the big monkey in the Hollywood movie lot, and he *will* mess you up, hosing your track time and denting that custom skin

job you spent those precious 60 seconds selecting. It just gets weirder — shark attacks, police helicopters, extraterrestrial vehicles, the works. The level of interactive detail is such that you can even use these bits of eye candy to your physical advantage, slamming your 'rod up onto moving trains or river rafts to shave precious seconds off your lap time.

So what's the catch? First of all, there's the opening movie, so jumpy and long and pointless it might as well have been filmed by Oliver Stone. But the biggest problem by far is that there's so little of the game — seven tracks (covering Nevada, California, Colorado, Mexico, and other regions) and eight cars, with the promise of more to come from downloadable packs — and at this level of in-your-face environmental detail, you'll want more, fast.

Still, for a racing game — and, again, that's all it really is — it's an absolute winner. Despite its lack of tracks and cars, it's a bundle of fun. The furious sense of speed and eye-goggling visuals

make it a virtual vehicular fry toy, an earthy, growling *Wipeout* that lets you cheat. If you wanna break the law without actually reducing pedestrians to long bloody streaks of tire-treaded necro-mash, *Speed Busters* is one of your best bets this season. Minor complaints aside, *Speed Busters* is a game well worth a spin. ▶

— CHRIS HUDAK *knows all about high speed, police radar, and tickets.*

GRAPHICS
Greatly detailed and varied locales with some truly startling animations.

SOUND
Loud, mean engines and crashes; context-sensitive music tracks.

DEPTH
Not bad, for a racing game — lots of shortcuts and surprises.

DESIGN
It's fine; it's a racing game; racing games are often fine. Did we mention it's a racing game?

RATING 7

➕ Pluses
→ Shortcuts and interactive environs
→ Car skin customization
→ Hidden mystery car and track

➖ Minuses
→ Only seven basic tracks
→ "Defined strategy" a lot of hooey
→ Only two sides

Creative tracks more than make up for the pointless intro movie and lack of options.

97

DEVELOPER → Looking Glass
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
REQUIRED → PII166 with 3D acceleration, P200 MMX without, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM drive
IDEAL → PII 266, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, TNT or Voodoo 2 card, 3D sound card, 8X CD-ROM

Thief: The Dark Project

The sweet sounds of silence

3D SOUND

ACCELE-RATED

Thief's D3D support highlights the TNT's superiority to the Voodoo 2 in performance. The images are sharper, smoother, and just better looking. The Voodoo 2 graphical look suffered from some fuzziness when compared with the TNT's, but was still quite manageable.

VOODOO 2
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

VOODOO 1
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

TNT
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

G200
| 1 | 2 | 3 |

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

Are you ready to throw your comfortable concept of what makes a first-person action game out the window? When you play Looking Glass' *Thief*, forget any notions of those familiar shooters — *Quake II*, *Unreal*, *Sin*, and *Shogo*. Forget, dare I say, *Half-Life*. Those are merely shooters. *Thief* is not a game for the twitch-addicted deathmatch geek who just wants to frag. It doesn't even have any multiplayer options (normally an unforgivable sin to PCXL). It is, however,

the best game I've played in years.

Placing you as the lone thief, Garrett, the game consists of 12 levels of ever-escalating complexity that will test your gaming skills in entirely new ways. It's the only game in which what you hear or don't hear is as important as what you see, in which your merest footfall could lead to a quick demise.

Weaving a fascinating tale, *Thief* leads Garrett into a bizarre web of medieval factions, evil beings, and a whole lot of breaking and entering. The story and mission briefings are conveyed through stylish

cinematic sequences that mix noirish animated and still-frame imagery. Gameplay revolves around three key elements: stealth, AI, and sound. Moving slowly to avoid combat, hiding in shadows, gaining access to out-of-the-way places, and sometimes just plain running are major tactics for survival. Outright combat is strongly discouraged, and on the expert difficulty level, killing humans results in a failed mission. This is *Thief*, after all, not *Assassin*.

The AI is incredible. If you so much as break wind while hiding in the shadows, nearby guards stop what they are doing and look around, talking to one another about the noise (smells are not implemented). Wait silently for a moment, and they'll decide it was barking spiders and go back about their business. Make more noise and they'll hunt you down. One guard might look, while another goes for reinforcements or the alarm. Injure a guard and he'll go get his buddies. If a guard stumbles across a body, he'll become alarmed and go looking for you.

Carrying around unconscious bodies and talking to dwarves is usually reserved for David Lynch movies (or a good night out with PCXL staffers), but in *Thief* you can do all of this and plenty more.

Masquerading as a fanatical Hammerite novice, you must brave the Hammerites' fortress and rob them blind before they discover you aren't one of them. Missions like this make *Thief* the surprise hit of the year.

The undead are among your biggest foes, with zombies that moan in anger as they weave toward you, and evil undead guards whose vile whispers are bone chilling. From the conversations of guards to the baying of gas-breathing lizards, character voices and audio are incredible.

AI isn't perfect, though, and guards occasionally act in odd ways — not reacting, running into walls, not seeing you when they should. But for the most part, the AI makes the game one of the most riveting and outright heart-pounding interactive experiences around.

Graphically, *Thief* pales next to *Unreal* and *Half-Life*. While the level architecture is generally fantastic, textures seem flat and splotchy. *Thief* doesn't have the sheer amount of eye candy of the others, but the mesmerizing gameplay makes up for that. Character graphics are well done, with detailed features and solid animation.

The levels are huge and challenging; they often taking two or more hours to complete, and are expertly designed with truly action/reaction-based puzzles. Guards take specific routes until disturbed, and you need patience, timing, and the right tools to get around undetected. Garrett has lock picks, flash grenades, healing potions that work gradually, and an incredibly useful bow. Moss arrows hit the ground and spread out, enabling you to pass silently over noisy floors (like metal grating).

Rope arrows stick into wooden ceilings and drop a climbing rope. Water arrows put out torches and fires — when used with holy water they are one of your few weapons against the undead — and fire arrows are highly destructive.

Play control is more complex than that of most first-person games. Garrett can crawl, walk, sidestep, run, jump, climb, and pull himself up ledges. You can sneak up on guards and pick their pockets, or knock one unconscious (or stab one in the back), then hide the body. But jumping and getting around obstacles sometimes proves problematic, and you can't lock doors behind you.

Another annoyance is that you can't take leftover items from one mission to the next. All the cash you stole goes to buying supplies before the next mission, but any items you didn't use are wasted. You can choose the difficulty level before each mission, but harder settings have objectives that aren't noted at the normal setting. If those extra tasks were listed in the normal mode, you would at least be aware of them.

Thief is a marker for how truly involving, innovative, and heart pounding this medium of ours can be. If you love games, you owe it to yourself to get this one. Just be sure to play it with the lights off and the speakers pumped up.

— JASON D'APRILE would like to be either the *Crusader* or Garrett. Or possibly Leisure Suit Lorry ...

Thief has fine architecture, especially the stained glass windows.

GRAPHICS
Detailed characters, great architecture, good lighting, and nice liquid effects.

SOUND
Awesome. Audio is the game's core, and every aspect of it is near perfect.

DEPTH
A unique, in-depth, involving, and just plain cool action/adventure game.

DESIGN
Exceptional level design and pacing. Tension is high throughout, and the gameplay is without peer.

RATING 9

Pluses
→ Distinctive, innovative gameplay
→ Scary and tense atmosphere
→ Enveloping sound

Minuses
→ Some clipping problems
→ Graphics aren't world beating
→ No multiplayer

DEVELOPER → Stainless Software
PUBLISHER → Interplay
REQUIRED → P200, 26MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, 2MB graphics card
IDEAL → PII 266, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2, gamepad

Carmageddon 2

It's like Los Angeles traffic, just a little bit nicer

FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL

ACCELE-RATED

Carmageddon 2 supports both D3D and Glide and runs fairly smoothly on either chipset. The Glide version looks slightly better than the D3D version, but both are lots of fun.

VOODOO 2	2	3
VOODOO 1	2	3
MATROX G200	2	3
RIVA TNT	2	3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

Propeller plus pedestrian equals messy fun.

Finally, the uncensored "Speed Racer" episodes.

It's 7:55 p.m. when you check to make sure you won't be late for the gorgeous blonde waiting to meet you at the movie theater at around 8 p.m. Two minutes later your hopes of making it on time are dashed by a Buick Roadmaster rolling out of the local old folks' home. As you languish behind a blue-haired septuagenarian and 3,000 pounds of slow-moving steel, the snack shop sells its last pack of Junior Mints, the final ticket for your movie is purchased, and a smarmy French guy sweeps the gorgeous blonde off her feet.

The way you feel at this moment is the very reason that Carmageddon 2 was created. It's catharsis personified. A perfect release of pent-up frustrations at the expense of an unknowing, unfeeling, and uncaring digital citizenry. You start with a car and a simple goal – to destroy everything that gets in your way. Sure, you could conceivably race around the game's immense tracks avoiding conflict like a slint-slipping pantywaist, but frankly that's not what this is all about. Carmageddon 2 is all about doing absolutely whatever you want.

Whether you feel like driving a dump truck over elephants, smashing yuppie skiers with an armor-plated VW van, or blowing through innocent drivers with your "Speed Racer" supercar, you have complete and utter freedom to act out your basest — and we mean really basest — whims. This freedom is both the best and worst part of Carmageddon 2.

At its best, this freedom lets you try things that you thought no one could ever think up, only to discover that the developer was one step ahead of you with a brilliant item placement. For instance, in one level you can get a sticky tire power-up that allows you to climb up walls. That enables you to discover a secret area littered with vile and destructive power-ups. At its worst, however, the freedom turns into a major

problem as you languish in a level trying to eliminate opponents, which gets more monotonous as the game progresses.

It's a problem that lingers from the original Carmageddon. Other nagging issues that should have been fixed for the sequel are frustrating control, unrealistic physics, and the sheer repetitiveness that's obvious when you reach about the 20th of the game's 30 destruction-derby levels.

While these problems are frustrating, the rest of the game is significantly beefed up compared with the original. The graphics are vastly improved, with polygonal vehicles and pedestrians, new environments, and a much smoother frame rate. The damage is also more impressive as cars twist, distort, and fall to pieces. The physics feel much more intuitive than before, and a few new multiplayer gameplay types have been included. The deathmatch maps are much tighter, and the recently added Internet support is a crucial fix. All this adds up to a great improvement on an already addictive game.

Carmageddon 2 offers more simple, addictive gameplay than 90% of the games on the market. And if you are just looking for a title to ease your frustrations, it will give Quake II deathmatch a run for its money and help you burn off that pesky road rage

much more quickly than a drive through your local strip mall.

— DAN EGGER is that guy who always pulls in front of you when you need to get somewhere quickly, so please quit flipping him off.

Carmageddon 2 is more offensive to delicate sensitivities than a cruise ship full of naked fat guys, but sure is fun.

STATUS: SEETHING WITH FURY

GRAPHICS
Graphics are OK, but dismembered pedestrians are bloody enough.

SOUND
The "Bos rock is silly, but it fits. Most of the other sounds are screams.

DEPTH
The missions you solve drive every fourth race are the best part of the game.

DESIGN
The developer gives you freedom to do whatever you want and then anticipates your every move. Brilliant.

RATING (7)

➕ Pluses
→ Total freedom
→ Enjoyable missions
→ The joy of a really great crash

➖ Minuses
→ Repetitive gameplay
→ Occasional stretches of monotony
→ The sad sound of a dying penguin

Viper Racing

Gotta Viper? Who needs Viagra?

STEERING WHEEL

ACCELE-RATED

The O3D support supplies the TNT/G200 with its chance to shine, and for Voodoo owners, the Glide support is excellent. On a P8 300 with all the details on, the Voodoo 1 clocked 33fps and the ATI Rage Pro running D3D clocked 30fps. Voodoo 2 and TNT both upped the frame rate, though not too much, with our ideal system recommendations, you should get great performance with all the details.

VOODOO 2	
VOODOO 1	
ATI RAGE PRO	
MATROX G200	

AM SUPPORT: Glide, Direct 3D

CARS AND CAJONES

Dodge isn't fooling anybody. Any one who buys a Viper is getting one of the biggest penis-extensions devices known to man. However, for those of us who don't have a spare $75,000 kicking around, here are some other automotive options to fire up the Dirk Diggler that lurks inside all of us.

'78 PONTIAC TRANS-AM → Yu gotta find th. black Smok.y and the Bandit mod.l with the big-ass HO engine and the chick.n decal on the hood. Still, yourself into one of these, and t.in intelligent Sally Field body offices will think you'r. hung lik. a bull .lephant

HUMMER → Ok, it's not any cheaper than the Viper, but you won't find a more testosterone-laced suit of wheels anywhere. Schwarzenegger drive a one, and dammit, his gonads are armor-plated.

'69 TOYOTA CELICA HATCHBACK (with some t.chy hockey equipment in the back) → The author's car. Babe magnet. Nuf said

You've been driving around the lot for hours looking for a parking spot, *any* spot, to slip your rusting beater into, when you see a metallic-blue Dodge Viper with a big white racing stripe down the middle parked at a 30-degree angle and taking up *two* stalls. Do you (a) get out and key a few choice words on its door, or (b) carry on looking for another spot while muttering under your breath what you'd like to do to all those yuppie pricks that drive Vipers?

Sierra's new *Viper Racing* arcade/sim hybrid offers another alternative. Hop behind the wheel of your own Dodge supercar and show those rich assholes how one of these hot machines is supposed to be driven. Developed for Sierra by MGI, *Viper Racing* is a surprisingly entertaining game considering its seemingly narrow-minded single-car concept.

Although solo gameplay in *Viper* is limited to the Quick Race (against the clock, a ghost car, or the *Pack*) and Career modes, each provides a wealth of options that will have you so enamored with this 500 hp beast you'd think Chrysler was signing your paychecks. The physics and damage modeling in the game are so well done that it's difficult to know if MGI is positioning the game to

compete as an arcade racer or a hardcore sim. There are three driving models — arcade, intermediate, and simulation — and although the sim setting seems a mite touchy for such a high-grip vehicle, the game's physics are absolutely top-notch. Advanced elements like torque steer, inertia, and weight transfer all play a big role in determining your car's level of adhesion, without penalizing the game's fun factor in any way.

This fun factor really kicks into high gear when you launch *Viper's* Career mode. Befitting a title that glorifies a toy of rich yuppies, Career mode is all about money and status. Successful race results earn you cash that you can use to upgrade your Viper with Sharper Image-style performance parts that in turn will make you even faster and generate more cash. A gazillion camera views and a full replay menu flesh out the immersive nature of these competitions and add great replayability.

With its extraordinary driving model, attractive 3D tracks, aggressive AI, excellent lag-free Internet play, and cool arcade twists (including options to fire horn-activated projectiles at your competition or turn the car into a plane), *Viper Racing* is a well-crafted and sophisticated racing sim that never loses sight of the fact that it's a game — and games should be fun, dammit!

— ANDY MAHOOD *believes penis size can be measured in cubic inches. We don't really care.*

Viper's car physics are great, but its aquatics ... aren't.

A cool bonus hack lets you launch cannonballs.

I remember when Chrysler cars were all complete shit.

GRAPHICS
Vipers have never looked this good outside a Chrysler showroom.

SOUND
Good engine sounds and tire squeals, but not much else.

DEPTH
Who woulda thunk that a single-make car racing game could be so addictive?

DESIGN
At only $30 *Viper Racing* is a steal. Its advanced simulation features blow away many hardcore titles.

RATING 8

➕ Pluses
→ Superb physics modeling
→ Extremely addictive Career option
→ Lag-free Internet play

➖ Minuses
→ You only race Vipers
→ Tiny rearview mirrors
→ Vipers are really expensive

The Envelopes, Please

THE PCXL SPORTS AWARDS OF 1998

I t's over, but 1998 is still fresh in our minds. And in remembrance of a truly bizarre year on the sporting surfaces of the country, we created the first annual PCXL Bizarro Sports Awards. Enjoy the winners, and laugh maniacally at the losers.

THE "JOE THEISMANN LEG SNAPPING" AWARD
To "Monday Night Football" for replaying the horrific Bryant Young fibula snap until no stomach was left unturned

THE "WHAT THE HECK WERE YOU THINKING" AWARD
To the 20 teams who passed on NFL Rookie of the Year and receiving phenom Randy Moss

THE "ONCE IS DUMB, TWICE IS JUST PLAIN STUPID" AWARD
To the Cincinnati Bengals, who passed on Randy Moss twice!

THE "BABE DIDN'T USE ANDRO" AWARD
To Mark McGwire for hitting 70 Androstene-aided home runs

THE "MONEY REALLY DOES BUY HAPPINESS" AWARD
To major league baseball, whose greedy owners have created a system in which eight teams can afford to compete for the championship and 22 others are the baseball equivalent of the Harlem Globetrotters' archival (read: whupping-boy) Washington Senators

THE "UNVEIL THE IDIOTS" AWARD
To Casey Martin for exposing the ugly prejudice of the rich old geezers who run the PGA

THE "SNOWBALL'S CHANCE IN HELL" AWARD
To NBC and TNT for starting their own football league, which they think can compete with the NFL

THE "WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE YOUR PERSONALITY-DEFICIENT MALE COUNTERPARTS" AWARD
To trash talkers Martina Hingis and Venus Williams, who managed to make the ever-boring Women's Pro Tennis Tour annoying as well

THE "WHO'D HAVE THUNK IT" AWARD
To Ross Rebagliati, the Canadian snowboarder, who got caught for actually (gasp!) smoking weed

THE "MORE HONEST THAN RODMAN" AWARD
To ex-Chicago Bear defenseman Alonzo Spellman for just skipping his quirky phase and jumping straight into outright craziness

Dennis Rodman

THE "AGONY OF DEFEAT" AWARD
To German ski master Hannan Maier for his spectacular Olympic wipeout that reminded us why we watch skiing in the first place

THE "MOUNTAIN DEW MUST BE A SPONSOR" AWARD
To the 1998 Winter Olympics, which included such noteworthy "Gen X" events as moguls and snowboarding halfpipe

THE "IF MARILYN MANSON CAN DO IT, SO CAN WE" AWARD
To the U.S. hockey team for throwing a fit after its crappy performance in the Olympics, trashing a hotel room in the process

THE "DAVID STERN CALLS HIM 'SIR'" AWARD
To Michael Jordan for single-handedly winning the NBA championship for the Bulls, the MVP award, and the All-Star MVP award. Forget the lockout — the NBA stopped when MJ announced he was considering retirement

THE "MUST BE IN THE FRONT ROW" AWARD
To NHL's Carolina Hurricanes for putting such a noncompetitive team on the ice that game attendance once actually dropped below 600 paying fans in a regular season game

THE "JUSTICE AIN'T SO BLIND" AWARD
To Latrell Sprewell for doing what every one of us wants to do to our boss. Except this rich athlete didn't have to go to jail or lose his job

THE "HEIR JORDAN" AWARD
To Kobe Bryant for showing us special moves at the all-star game that make us think he could replace Michael, and then reminding us that no one will ever replace Michael when his Lakers were swept by the Utah Jazz

Kobe Bryant

THE "COULDN'T ANYONE ELSE HAVE WON? ANYONE?" AWARD
To France for winning its own World Cup in the expected smarmy fashion

THE "FALSE HOPES" AWARD
To Doug Flutie for letting all of us normal guys watch football and think "I could be doing that" even though we never could

THE "WE GIVE HIM SIX MONTHS" AWARD
To Keith Olbermann for quitting SportsCenter, joining MSNBC, quitting MSNBC, and finding what he calls "a permanent home" on Fox Sports

THE "MEN'S SPORT IS ALWAYS BETTER" AWARD
To the U.S. men's soccer team for finishing 32nd of 32 nations at the World Cup, and then facing the ignominy of the fact that the U.S. women's team is likely to blitz its own World Cup in '99

Keith Olbermann

THE STANDINGS

This month the only new updates to the standings are those made in soccer. FIFA 99 came out once again as the clear leader, but it looks suspiciously like FIFA 98.

GAME TITLE		W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	2	0
	NBA Live 98	2	0
	NBA Action	1	2
FOOTBALL	NCAA 99	2	0
	GameDay 99	1	0
	Madden 99	2	0
GOLF	Links LS 99	3	2
	Tiger Woods 99	2	1
	Golden Tee Golf	1	2
	Fox Sports Golf 99	2	3
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	0
	Powerplay 98	0	2
BASEBALL	High Heat 99	4	0
	Triple Play 99	3	2
	VR Baseball 2000	2	0
	HardBall 6	1	3
	Microsoft Baseball 3D	2	4
SOCCER	FIFA 99	2	0
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	1	0
	Sensible Soccer 98	0	0

| DEVELOPER --> | Radical |
PUBLISHER -->	EA Sports
REQUIRED -->	P166, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard drive, 2MB graphics card, 4x CD-ROM
IDEAL -->	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 167MB hard drive, TNT, gamepad

X Games Pro Boarders

Finally, a snowboarding game without too much marketing crap

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Pro Boarders supports Direct3D acceleration only, which means that Voodoo 2 boards have little or no advantage over fast D3D boards such as the TNT and G200. In our tests, the game ran smoothly on each card even with detail turned on high.

VOODOO 2	
1	2 3

VOODOO 1	
1	2 3
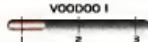
RIVA TNT	
1	2 3

MATROX G200	
1	2 3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

4/4

With modes like a halfpipe and a boarder X race, the game has variety and longevity.

T he most annoying thing about the whole "Gen X" concept is the way that graying marketing executives have tried to squeeze an entire generation into a corny stereotype. While the staff of PCXL spends much of its time drinking lemon-lime soda pops, piercing body parts, screaming into the camera, and jumping out of airplanes, not everyone raised in the '70s follows suit. So you can understand why we had certain misgivings when we first heard about this game.

But much to our surprise, X Games Pro Boarder was not as bad of a stereotypical mess as the ESPN "sporting event" (cynical smirk) that spawned it. Sure, the game includes actual snowboarding professionals, the obligatory Mountain Dew ads, and some over-the-top stunts, but behind all that fluff is actually a decent game.

The strength of the game is its variety. Pro Boarders has nine standard events, including half-pipes, road jumping, and the all-important boarder X. You start the game with five events and open up four more with wins.

What makes these events so enjoyable is that the control gives you a wide variety of moves that are easily and quickly put into

I don't care how "extreme" you are — when you land this jump, it's going to hurt.

action. This lets you feel like a pro-fessional and makes it very simple for you to look really good. And though the snowboarding physics are never quite convincing, they are realistic enough to be intuitive.

The main problem lies in learning the moves for each event. The way a trick works in one event doesn't necessarily carry over to the next, so you are forced to relearn the moves over and over. This makes things much more difficult than they should be.

Pro Boarders is top-notch graph-ically and makes the most of 3D acceleration. The snowy spray behind each boarder is impressive, but a little more powder on the slopes would have done wonders.

One thing that certainly feels real is the music, which is a perfect fit for the sport. Tracks by Foo Fighters, NOFX, Rancid, the always great Pennywise, and many other surf/skate bands actually add to the game's atmosphere rather than make the title feel like a cheap snowboarding rip-off.

There aren't many good winter sports for PC owners to play (Sierra's Skiing 99 certainly doesn't count), so this title is a breath of fresh air. While it isn't perfect, Pro Boarders is an enjoyable enough

diversion that has the added benefit of a great soundtrack. Overall, that's not so bad.

— DAN EGGER is the exact oppo-site of extreme, but he does drink Mountain Dew.

GRAPHICS
Adequate, but lacking little details that make a game look real.

SOUND
The music is excellent (if a bit extreme), but the game sounds are forgettable.

CONTROL
Tight, but you are forced to relearn controls after each event.

REALISM
Feel is good, but powdered snow would look much better.

RATING 6

Pluses
→ Soundtrack
→ Gameplay variety
→ Riding a helicopter blade

Minuses
→ Too many options hidden
→ Control schemes lack consistency
→ Self-important "professional" snowboarders

REDNECK RACE-OFF: A NASCAR PREVIEW

Even though it stretches the definition of the word *sport*, Nascar is a sport, and it's huge. Forget football, basketball, baseball, and hockey — if you live south of the Mason-Dixon line, Nascar is life. This year we've got not one but two big name Nascar games heading to the PC. *Nascar Racing '99* is a mini-upgrade of *Nascar 2*, *Nascar Revolution* looks and plays a lot like a console race, and the "Dukes of Hazzard" ... well, it's just cool.

	NASCAR RACING '99	NASCAR REVOLUTION	"DUKES OF HAZZARD"
Tracks	Thirty-four	Sixteen	One really long dirt- and possum-covered track with lots of jumps
Drivers	Thirty-one, plus six Nascar legends	Countless (read: too many to bother counting) Nascar and truck racers	Two: one dumb, the other not nearly as bright
Technology Level	Low: basically *Nascar Racing 2* with few notable changes	Mid: a graphically impressive game with cool lighting effects	High: the best eight-cylinder engines that Detroit could produce in the late '70s
Graphic Treats	Native 3Dfx accelerator support, plenty of track detail	Changing light conditions, environment mapping, D3D support	Catherine Bach in short shorts
Simulation Level	Ultracomplex, with real-world physics	More arcade gameplay, highly realistic sound	C'mon, a Dodge Charger just can't jump a 20-foot irrigation ditch
Crashes	Parts go flying, cheesy smoke effects cloud the screen, cars take on semirealistic damage	Realistic damage on vehicles, but arcade-style accidents in which cars go flying but always land on their wheels	Always impressive, usually involving police cruisers landing in mud
Commentary	No running commentary, but a real-time pit boss warns you of dangers (like hitting him, for example)	TV-style commentary by Bob Jenkins and Benny Parsons, plus crew chatter	The country-cool commentary by Waylon Jennings. "I sure hope the Duke boys aren't afraid of heights"
Extraneous Details	Pickup-truck racing	Motion-captured pit crews	Plot
Best Moment	Turning the wrong way on the track and making 32 other cars fly into tiny little pieces	Turning the wrong way on the track and making 32 other cars come to a complete stop	When Daisy Duke jumped into the pond to save Enos

PC ACCELERATOR February 1999 #5 Nascar Track Manager (You maintain all tracks, making sure no one sneaks in a right turn)

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THIS AIN'T NO SKINS GAME.

GOLF WITH . . . ATTITUDE!

How many times have you secretly wanted to drive the ball at the idiot playing in front of you?

At Armadillo Al's **Demolition Driving Range**, you can blow slow-playing snobs into fiery bits.

Have you ever put a silent curse on your opponent's next shot?

On the mystical **Mojo Bay Country Club**, you can curse your rival's shots and watch them corkscrew into the ribs of a 50-foot skeleton, or boomerang into shark-infested waters.

have you ever felt like just blowing up your opponent with a magic exploding ball?

Invite your fiercest adversary to a game of Death Matchplay on the **Dimension X Battlefield**—and live the dream!

FIFA 99

killer game!

The king of soccer games is getting better with age

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

EA Sports' deal with 3Dfx means that the Voodoo 2 gives the best look on the field. It's all down to pushing those little polys as fast as possible, and the Voodoo 2 certainly achieves that well. Weather effects such as light, fog, rain, and snow supply variations you don't get using software.

VOODOO 2		
1	2	3

VOODOO 1		
1	2	3

RIVA TNT		
1	2	3

MATROX G200		
1	2	3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

Every year it's the same — one of my most eagerly awaited games is the next FIFA installment. Every year I wonder what the EA Sports factory can do to improve things, and every year it does just enough to convince me that the game's worth recommending. Such is the case with FIFA 99, definitely the best soccer game on the PC and definitely another case of doing just enough.

So what's improved? The main thing is clearly the animation system. A new "interruptible" routine means faster, more fluid action. Any player animation can be interrupted whenever you try something new. In 99, the players react immediately, giving a greater sense of control and an even better look to the flowing soccer game.

There are also more animations and improved overall control. French star David Ginola contributed his vast array of skills to the detailed motion capturing, and it really pays off with by far the most realistic-looking soccer game. The game includes a few extra "special mo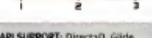ves," but they can be difficult to pull off without EA Sports' (unofficially, but quite obviously) preferred Gravis eight-button gamepad. All the cut scenes (for goals, free kicks, and referee decisions) have been reworked with more detail, and players' mouths now move in the close-ups (though I didn't notice one silent mouthed profanity — where's the realism?).

On the AI side, the FIFA team seems to have adopted a philosophy similar to that of NHL's design

INSTANT REPLAY

If you shoot low this close to the goal, the shot has a great chance of dribbling in.

— if you can't overhaul the goalkeeper AI sufficiently, just make it more difficult to shoot. Despite defending deep (thus getting bodies in the way of shots), defenders are easily foxed by the special moves, so once you have practiced these moves, you can easily get into goal-scoring positions. The goalkeepers seem possibly worse than in WC98 — they tend to parry shots from inside the penalty area that either dribble in to the goal or fall loose in the six-yard box (just make sure you shoot low).

New additions to the teams include the forward-looking European Dream League — a default setup whereby the top teams from all the European leagues play in one superleague. A nice addition is the inclusion of top teams from leagues outside the familiar staples, so top Greek and Turkish teams get their first showing. The team management has been retained, allowing you to transfer players, and the training mode is useful for practicing set plays (but there's still no play designer).

FIFA is a great two-player game, but there's no sign of Internet play being possible anytime soon. But once again, FIFA is the only soccer game you need in your collection.

> — **ROB SMITH** is glad Sheffield Utd aren't featured in FIFA — it would be galling to see them suck in a game as well as real life.

GRAPHICS
Amazingly detailed with fantastic animation — the best got better, once again.

SOUND
Decent chants, and great main commentary from stalwart John Motson, but pundit Mark Lawrenson has an appallingly weak voice.

CONTROL
Interruptible animations give incredible fluidity to the movement.

REALISM
Watching someone else play is like watching a game on TV.

RATING 9

+ Pluses
- Incredibly detailed animation
- Faster gameplay
- John Motson's commentary

− Minuses
- Lackluster crowd noises
- Perpetually questionable goalkeepers
- Mark Lawrenson's wimpy voice

The best riots involve head stomping.

Matches occasionally pause for break dancing.

PC ACCELERATOR February 1999

#4: The English Soccer Hooligan Manager (in a footy fans, blunt objects and liquor; shake well)

www.pcxl.com

All this 3D acceleration gets a little much at times, so we took baseball and cricket (no shit) management games on a grueling PCXL test run. The results should help sports geeks the world over with purchasing decisions and crucial life choices.

CAN YOU MANAGE?

Baseball Mogul

DEVELOPER → Infinite Monkey
PUBLISHER → WizardWorks

TARGET AUDIENCE: Fantasy baseball geeks who read box scores more thoroughly than Paine Webber reads the stock quotes. Most don't even know what the players look like or what a cut-off man is, but they can tell you the tendencies of certain hitters in September on sunny days versus left-handers with two-syllable last names

EASE OF GETTING STARTED: Simple interface makes multiple seasons a quick affair

ADDICTIVENESS: Make spent entire days tearing down and rebuilding the Orioles franchise. Eat your heart out, Wayne Huizenga

LEVEL OF REALISM: No players' license, no MLB license, and very little detail to speak of

WHAT IT'S MISSING: Clubhouse temper tantrums, drug suspensions, player strikes, and really dumb trades

APPEAL TO NONFANS: None whatsoever, unless you find made-up names to be extremely funny

COOL LEVEL OF DETAIL: Adjusting hot dog and beer prices to make fat blue-collar workers pay for millionaire prima donna's salary

SEEMINGLY POINTLESS DETAILS: Changing the price of ice cream. This has no effect since ice cream doesn't go with beer

SEASONS UNTIL GAME IS POPULATED BY UNRECOGNIZABLE PLAYERS: Fake names mean most players are unrecognizable right from the start

COACHING OPTIONS: Changing the lineup — but the lack of details like vs. LH/RH makes this sim very shallow

SUREFIRE TRICK TO PROSPERITY: Spend your money on young players. Sign them until they're 33, then dump 'em for cheap young talent. In other words, screw loyalty

SUREFIRE PATH TO DESTRUCTION: Trading. The computer GMs are ruthless and always get the better end of the deal
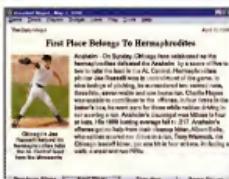
THE TRAIL OF THE BIG SPENDER LEADS TO: Much debt, one championship, then years and years of rebuilding

THE TRAIL OF THE SPENDTHRIFT LEADS TO: The Montreal Expos. You'll occasionally get some cheap talent, but if you ante up the bucks, they'll leave in a heartbeat

BEST PLAYER NAMES: Chyck Knablauch, Grogg Jofferles, Bab Abrou, Tanl Gwon, Jyan Ganzalez, Stove Hawe

THE FARM SYSTEM: As in real life, prospects often don't work out as expected. Unfortunately there isn't an option to fire the scout that told you last year he was a "can't miss" and now this year says "he'll never make it in the pros"

BEST MOMENT: When Mike managed to win seven consecutive World Series titles (of course, his first 10 seasons were the worst in Orioles history; rebuilding is a long process)

RATING **3**

International Cricket Captain

DEVELOPER → Empire Interactive
PUBLISHER → Empire Interactive

TARGET AUDIENCE: ICC targets those punters who take Thursday and Friday off work to get to "test" matches at 11 a.m. and watch all the way through until "stumps" around 6 p.m. Saturday is spent with the buddies, back at the game, drinking vast quantities of beer. Sunday and Monday are spent dejectedly ruing another England loss

EASE OF GETTING STARTED: Simple — select team, begin play

ADDICTIVENESS: Requires at least one game per day to prevent convulsions, shakes, and spitting fits

LEVEL OF REALISM: When you get down to the real nitty-gritty of weather, pitch condition, field placements, and lunch times, the detail is incredible

WHAT IT'S MISSING: The background politics of the elderly cricket "establishment" refusing to allow the game to be brought into the 19th, er, 20th century

APPEAL TO NONFANS: Zero — you can only learn about cricket from someone who knows how to play

COOL LEVEL OF DETAIL: ICC mirrors its staggeringly polite sport, interrupting games for lunch, letting you make a cup of tea and eat some tiny cucumber sandwiches

SEEMINGLY POINTLESS DETAILS: the ability to inspect the wicket [Editor's note: Is this printable? "Inspect the wicket" sounds dirty]

SEASONS UNTIL GAME IS POPULATED BY UNRECOGNIZABLE PLAYERS: At least 20 — cricketers can play into their 40s

COACHING OPTIONS: They exist, but only a few of the team players can train at any one time

SUREFIRE TRICK TO PROSPERITY: You can't buy success in ICC — it's all down to on-field captaincy and not exhausting your bowlers with over-aggressive tactics

SUREFIRE PATH TO DESTRUCTION: Turning the aggression way up to emulate the feats of the Sri Lankan international team batsmen

THE TRAIL OF THE BIG SPENDER LEADS TO: Contract negotiations are possible, but cricketers are pathetically paid because the clubs are so cheap

THE TRAIL OF THE SPENDTHRIFT LEADS TO: Exactly the same issues as the big spender. It's down to the on-field tactics and nurturing a few talented youngsters

BEST PLAYER NAMES: (this name is real) Sri Lankan Mapa Lalalage Chandima Niroshan Bandaratilake

THE FARM SYSTEM: When a seasoned pro hits a rocky spell it's time to bring in the youngsters. There's a strong tradition of senior players helping the less-experienced players adjust to top-flight cricket, so mix and match here

BEST MOMENT: Crowding the batsmen with close fielders in the last over of a tense four-day struggle, and getting the final wicket in the final over of the game (see, I told you that if you don't understand cricket, you can't learn it without someone who knows telling you the intricacies!)

RATING **8**

HALF-LIFE MULTIPLAYER

IT AIN'T YOUR NORMAL FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

BLOODY HELL, WE JUST CAN'T STOP TALKING ABOUT THIS *HALF-LIFE* THING

Valve made a number of tweaks to the single player weapons in their multiplayer option. So we just had to try them out and let you know what we found.

Always look for the ledges to get around the level. And remember to reload whenever you get the chance.

The Crossbow camping spot is easy to hit with a carefully controlled rocket. The Egon is less effective in open areas.

WEAPON CHANGES

THE CROSSBOW

It's primary fire in multiplayer is a small radius rocket blast. Don't think of it as a rocket launcher—that's the LAW—more a little extra power for well-aimed shots. Only try for splash damage when you know your opponent has been injured, and in general, the primary function is only really useful when you get a dead-on shot.

A main benefit of the Crossbow is its secondary fire sniper scope. One shot and an enemy is dead. Due to *Half-Life*'s level design, there are few genuinely safe camping spots, but in games of few players (no more than 6) scoping for snipe kills is a sure way of proving to everyone that you're sorely lacking in the cajones department.

THE TAU CANNON

In multiplayer, the primary blast ricochets off walls, making it useful in more enclosed spaces like tight

corridors. The powered-up secondary function is useful in a variety of ways. For starters, it will fire through walls, spreading out in to a wider blast radius at anyone thinking they're safe. That same powered fire option can be deadly with a direct hit in a similar fashion to *Quake II*'s railgun. And finally, and even more usefully, is the "rocket jump". Power it up, look at the ground and release. You don't take damage from the blast and with precision control can limit the amount of distance you want to get—so jumping one level will use a smaller amount of ammo. Practice on your own with this—not only is it a vicious weapon to a sharp shooter, but rocket jumping around a level is a great offensive and defensive tactic.

LEVEL TACTICS

BOOT CAMP

The LAW is probably the weapon du jour here just for the wide-open spaces. The crossbow location is an obvious camping spot though it has many access points and is tough to defend. Moving around the many ledges provides more opportunity to hit the unsuspecting. Rocket jumping with the Tau Cannon to get to the ledges can get you out of trouble fast. People generally don't look at the ledges so use them to move around the level quickly. Claymores can also be very effective on levels with wide spaces simply because they can end up covering large areas.

BOUNCE

The Crossbow ledge is the main control point here. It gives a great view of all the access points to the outdoor area and supplies plenty of ammo. The only danger is staying zoomed in to targets for too long and not noticing other people heading up the ladder. Remember that the bounce points cause people to slow at the apex of their leap—that's an ideal moment to peg them with the bolt.

When you go up the ladder in to the small tunnel, look behind you on the ledges to pick up the Snarks—they're really useful out in the open when you're safely up high on a ledge. Always try to make your jump off a bounce pad as landing back on the ground does so points of damage.

DATACORE

The MP5 rules here, though the grenades are at a premium. The central room is the scene of many fights, so throw grenades and them mop up with the primary fire. With a lot of people, this level can get quite insane, so try switching to the bludgeoning crowbar instead of the pistol—it does more damage when you're up close and personal.

Be careful with the LAW—it's mighty effective, of course, but the narrow corridors mean you're likely to damage yourself in the process.

Always keep your eyes moving, checking down corridors as you don't know when someone else is going to have the bead on you with their crosshairs. Amen.

LAMBDA BUNKER

Getting the Egon and then going on a rampage is the key here. The level is designed to give a smooth beat run from the Egon, down the ramp, to the left and up the stairs and back around. The LAW is also available. Try aiming at the floor as you move – the red dot gives away your location and weapon, so only look up as you turn corners and you're more likely to get a bead on someone. Likewise, if you see the red dot hovering near your location, get behind a wall, fast.

The crossbow is useful when defending the Egon room until it respawns and you begin another rampage.

With the Egon try hitting the fire button quickly – it does a little damage, but doesn't use any ammo.

SNARK PIT

Getting the Egon will give you a great advantage, especially when there are many people in a level. Be sure with your footing, hopping over to its radiation-riddled location – remember there's a health unit not far away. This level is definitely one in which you need to keep moving. The circular pattern of running a beat will take you past enough weapons to give you a shot of holding on to hit the switch to get the LAW. There are no decent camping spots so while the crossbow is always useful, the shotgun and it's double-barreled secondary fire is more likely to be your friend.

Er, duck!

You kind of get the idea that there's been a battle here, don't you?

STALKYARD

This is one of the most difficult levels due to the awkward positioning of the weapons. Getting the LAW requires nimble jumping around the crates. It is possible to get on top of the light fittings on the ceiling, which is an effective camping spot. Use the shotgun and MP5 to secure your survival and then try to command the gun emplacement.

SUBTRANSIT

The train is the key – not only does it get you around to the useful locations fast (the Egon gun and Crossbow) but by crouching on it you can give yourself protection against enemy fire. It is possible to run a beat on the upper level, collecting health and pegging people lower down with Crossbow bolts.

The LAW spawn spot is a good place to camp out and watch the fights below.

UNDERTOW

Possibly the most frustrating level, as the flooding option, when there are a lot of players, gets lame fast. With just a few players, remember which weapons to use underwater – the Hivehand (Hornet Gun), standard pistol, crossbow, LAW, and don't forget the crowbar – and try

If you're on the ground, always look to the gun spot as you enter the room. One LAW is all it will take to flush someone out.

to control that central room. The long jump pack lets you get across the middle very fast, and give you access to the health unit room.

The Egon can be found above the water flow by dropping in to the opening in the ceiling. It's also easy to cause a lot of annoying damage with the claymores and satchel charges. Use the speed-up platforms to get around (claymores here can score a lot of cheap kills, and are tough to avoid if you're not paying attention).

UNDERHAND UNDERTOW

Make sure you drop in to the middle of the water to get the LAW – and watch for sneaky claymores.

Grab the crossbow and head to the other side of the pool and use both platforms as you peg people coming in to the pool.

Churchill replied "Madam, you are ugly, but at least in the morning I shall be sober"

RETURN TO
HOMEWORLD
FASTER
ON A
FALCON

DELTA FORCE

HOW TO BECOME AN ELITE SOLDIER

MAKE A NAME FOR YOURSELF ON NOVAWORLD WITH THESE DEVELOPER TIPS

Welcome to Fort Bragg. You have been selected because you were the best in your company. You were "The Man" in the Green Berets or perhaps a highly decorated soldier in the 82nd airborne division. You were somebody. But that was kindergarten, children, 'cause you are going to have to really sweat to keep up. You're in Delta Force now. What makes you think you've got what it takes?

You can't feel the cold, so jump in to the water to make a stealthy move towards the enemies' base.

HINTS & TIPS

USE YOUR SENSES

Sight and sound are incredibly crucial. The sounds of gunfire and walking can often give away the position of an enemy. Don't rely solely on your scope. Spot your target by scanning the area with your naked eye. If you see movement or a splash of color, then sight down the scope.

BE PATIENT

Don't shoot until you have a clean shot otherwise you will give away your position – remaining out of sight is the key to staying alive. Wasting ammo is also to be avoided wherever possible.

USE STEALTH

ALWAYS crouch or lie prone. Never stand there like a sitting or proudly standing duck! Never stand out in open areas. Use stealth (crawling) to find your target, or better yet, let them come to you. If you are moving, hug the lower edges of the hill, NOT the top. Last thing you want to do is stick out on the horizon.

STAY FOCUSED

Pay attention to your objective, trying to kill every sentry you see can get you killed. You've got a specific mission to do. I'd much rather see you complete the task in a quick and efficient manner, than waste half the mission hunting down every last terrorist.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Don't assume that around every corner or over every hill there is an easy 'kill'. Enemies, especially human players, will have more interesting tactics than running into your sights. It is usually a good idea to double tap an opponent. By putting the extra bullet in him when he's going down, ensures that he won't have a nasty surprise for you when you turn your back.

LEAD YOUR SHOTS

If your target is running, take into account that the bullet takes a while to reach its destination. Don't forget about gravity either. Bullets will start to drop at their longest ranges. Many opponents will zigzag

as they run to make them a harder target, so compensate for this.

TRAVEL LIGHT

You will move faster armed with a knife than you will with a SAW. If you need to catch up to an opponent, you can gain some ground by switching to the knife.

USE FORWARD CAMERAS

Remember that you have access to the eyes of all of your teammates. Use their Forward Observer Cameras to evaluate their situation. Helping a teammate out of a bind means that he's still alive and later he may save your butt.

PRACTICE WITHOUT TRACERS

Tracers make it real easy to locate an enemy that is shooting at you. But one of these days, you are going to play a multiplayer game where the host has turned off Tracers. Practice some single player missions this way. When the host selects this option, you want to be the guy with the advantage.

DON'T WALK, SWIM

If the map you are playing on has water, use it. Water has the advantage of stealth and protection. It is harder to see an enemy approaching from underwater. Also weapon's bullets lose velocity when entering the water and therefore are not as lethal. Diving deeper may even protect you from explosives. But watch for piranhas.

↑I'M THE KING OF THE HILL→

Solo king of the hill tactics require you taking cover and digging in. Use grenades to create smoke to obscure your position, then lie prone and pick off anyone who dares to walk across your path.

CHOOSING WEAPONS

One of the main things that make Delta Force so effective is the ability to choose the right tool for the job. Different scenarios require different thinking. Don't get attached to one weapon. Master them all.

Here are some tactical advantages and disadvantages for each weapon:

M249 SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon)

When you want to cause some

serious damage to multiple enemies at close range, the SAW is the perfect weapon to tear through infantry. You don't care about a scope or precision shooting with this devastating meat grinder, just point at anything in your way and fill the area with bullets. Be aware that the SAW is the heaviest weapon and it will slow you down.

M4 5.56MM CARBINE with attached M203 40mm Grenade Launcher
All around good weapon to have. The 4x scope allows for decent accuracy with ranged shots and the burst mode can cut up opponents at close quarters. With the added bonus of the M203 grenade launcher, this weapon is good for most situations. When in doubt, take the M4.

REMINGTON 7.62MM M40A1 SNIPER RIFLE
The preferred sniper weapon among marines.

BARRETT LIGHT .50 CALIBER SNIPER RIFLE
Extremely lethal at long ranges, the Barrett is the perfect choice for those who like to find a hidden high spot and make camp.

HECKLER & KOCH 9MM MP5 SUBMACHINE GUN with integral silencer and 30 round clip
Lightweight and silent, the MP5 is an excellent choice for slipping in behind the enemy and stealthily taking them out from the inside.

SECONDARY WEAPON

SATCHEL CHARGES with radio detonator
With the largest blast radius, the Satchel is the best choice for blowing up large radius areas.

M18 CLAYMORES
This is an excellent weapon for setting traps. Unlike the satchel charge, claymores are directional.

CAPTURE THE FLAG

In team CTF, organize attackers and defenders and stick to these jobs. Also get a couple of snipers in good positions.

Get on with the game, soldier, this guy's a goner. In war there are casualties, just try to make sure that you're not one of them.

Just remember not to cross in front of a claymore that you have set.

LAW2 (Light Anti-tank Weapon)
Next to the knife kill, there is perhaps no more satisfying feeling than blowing something to pieces with the LAW. Designed to take out vehicles, this weapon packs quite a punch with more explosive capability than the grenade launcher and better range. It's devastating power makes it one of the most preferred choices in secondary weapons.

DOUBLE AMMO LOAD
If you are the type of player who

Kills count, flags count more.

It's really not a difficult thing to remember – if your scope has an extra red crosshair, and a name in it, it's a buddy. Don't shoot.

pulls the trigger and doesn't let go until everyone is dead, it might be a good idea to have extra ammunition. Running out of ammo and relying on your knife might offer a manic thrill, but it's likely to be short-lived.

CHOOSING A SIDEARM

SPECIAL OPERATIONS .45 PISTOL
The spec ops .45 has greater stopping power than the High Standard. Choose this handgun if you want to drop your enemies quickly and with a loud thud.

HIGH STANDARD .22 PISTOL
Virtually silent, this high accuracy firearm is the perfect complement to a loud primary weapon. Use it to stealthily eliminate unsuspecting perimeter guards. But remember that it only has a limited range.

Don't just run for base when you grab a flag – take your time and plot a route with teammate support to get back safely.

PC ACCELERATOR February 1999 She complained that he was always in and out without her ever knowing. (ba bum)

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How Long Will Half-Life Last?

Even though Valve's masterpiece didn't exactly revolutionize deathmatch after its fall release, it certainly took the concept to the next logical level. However, one question remains. Where does it go from here? Will players continue to crowd servers, stay in the massive *Half-Life* community and embrace maps and mods created for the game, or will they abandon this title like so many other shooters that have been laid by the wayside? (Been playing those *Nom* mods lately? We didn't think so.)

The first months of *Half-Life* sales were solid, but could not be described as phenomenal. Despite ecstatic reviews from the press (including excited thumbs up even from our cynical editors) the game debuted on sales charts below *Tomb Roider III*, several deer hunting games and a *Barbie* CD-ROM that offered absolutely no toy nudity. Not quite the beginning you would hope for in a genre buster.

But early sales do not always define a game's final impact. Games such as *Tomb Raider*, *Diablo*, and even *Quoke* have garnered blockbuster sales numbers because of long-lasting, steady sales. *Half-Life* will have a difficult road to travel if it wants to join the action game elite.

Why Half-Life will be the top multiplayer game in 1999

1. IT'S BETTER THAN ANYTHING ELSE ON THE MARKET.
Maybe the weapons are not as familiar as those in *Quake* and maybe it doesn't have the clever levels found in *Sin's* deathmatch, but *Half-Life* offers flat-out great multiplayer action. If you've played the game you know how much the weapon variety and sound effects set this title's multiplayer action above any other traditional deathmatch game on the market. We also like the little details that just make the game fun, such as the configurable graffiti decals that players can personalize for their own tagging purposes. PCXL deathmatches require players to spray their logo over each kill – it makes everything a little more personal.

Here's a simple tutorial on how to make your own decals:
→ In a graphics program such as Paint Shop Pro or Adobe Photoshop (download versions available on the Internet), create a new image (must use 8/W grayscale as image type) that is either 32 x 32 or 64 x 64 pixels
→ Set White as background color and paint your logo (Remember that black will be transparent and white will be the color that shows up as your decal)
→ Copy your decal to the \Half-Life\logos directory
→ Start and select your logo from the multiplayer screen.

It's easy enough that you should have no excuse for not having your own decal. Here are some of the best we've found on the web (www.planethalflife.com/repository/)

→ Lose blood now, ask me how
→ Space Ghost
→ If you can read this, you're already dead
→ Monica Lewinsky
→ 97 variations of the Nine Inch Nails logo
→ Calvin and Hobbes

2. IT SHIPPED WITH *WORLD-CRAFT 2.0*
Valve Software obviously took notes during the release of *Unreal*. While that game had its Internet problems, the gaming community warmly embraced its editor. *Half-Life* shipped with *WorldCraft 2.0* in the box, which all but ensures that the most creative gamers will be devising new levels as soon as they finish the game. While the level editor is not as intuitive for first time users as the *Unreal* edi-

→ Salma Hayek (obviously lifted from www.pcxl.com)

tor, many designers feel that it is a better overall product.

Where to get *WorldCraft* help: While many websites offer instructions and tutorials on using *World-Craft*, one site is the clear leader in terms of quality and depth. The site is known as The Forge (www.planetquake.com/worldcraft/), and it offers the best tutorials, latest updates and the most comprehensive trouble-shooting guide available. The Forge also includes some handy prefabricated objects for you to slip into your own level.

decal repository grab.tif @ 300% (RGB)
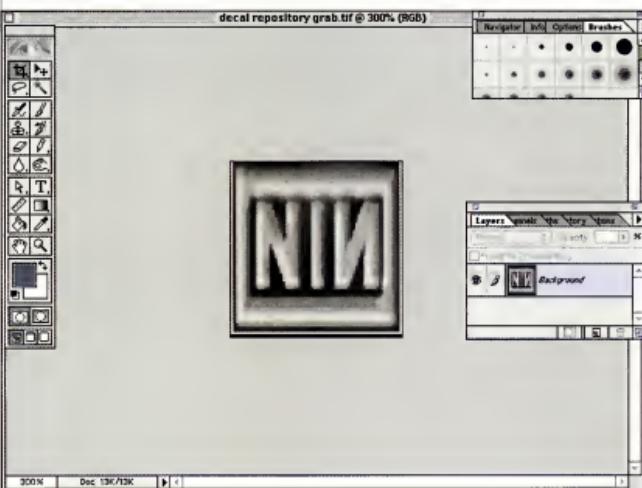
You can make your own decals for *Half-Life* with just about any popular graphics program.

Worldcraft 2.0

Worldcraft 2.0 is the level editor of choice for the Half-Life mod community.

3. IT'S GOT THE RABID FOLLOWING

Since well before its launch, *Half-Life* has enjoyed one of the most fanatic followings of any current game. The army of news sites that cleared the way for the game's launch have evolved into a vibrant community that will ensure *Half-Life's* long term success.

While many of these sites cover the *Half-Life* world very thoroughly, one stands out above the rest as the clear leader. Once known as Contaminated.net, Planet Half-Life (www.planethalflife.com) hosts many of the best *Half-Life* oriented sites on the web. Just about anything that has to do with *Half-Life* is covered in this network, from mods to fan art.

This kind of infrastructure is crucial to building a thriving base of fans. It also ensures that you will be able to find new and fresh mods, maps, and other additions to *Half-Life* months down the road.

Here is some of the best of the network sites:

Radium (www.planethalflife.net/radium/) reviews both user-made and professional *Half-Life* death-

match maps. The site is laid out well, and the reviews are thorough enough that you won't end up downloading and playing bad levels.

4. IT'S BASED ON *QUAKE II*

No other game has maintained such a fervent fan following for as

long as *Quake*. Because of this, many of the best modifications, maps and models can be easily ported over to *Half-Life*. The connection between the two games also means that you will be able to play against tough competition as *Quake* fanatics filter over to *Half-*

Life servers to see what all the fuss is about.

5. IT'S BUILDING UP TO *TEAM FORTRESS*

Despite the overwhelming positive response to *Half-Life*, its follow-up is even more exciting to online gamers. The *Team Fortress* expansion will be the first mass-market version of the mod that revolutionized *Quake* deathmatch, and now it's getting the full *Half-Life* treatment. The tandem of *TF* and *Half-Life* will fuel each other's longevity and doubly ensure that both will remain top deathmatch outposts throughout 1999.

Team Fortress is listed as coming out during the all-too-common (and confusing) "when it's ready" stage. However, while you wait for it, and even after it hits stores, check out Planet Fortress (www.planetfortress.com) for the best news and a great collection of maps, mods, and other goodies for the original *Quake*-based *Team Fortress* mod.

PLANETHALFLIFE

Planet Half-Life hosts many of the best related websites.

radium

December 11, 1998
I appreciate for the lack of updates here lately, I have been waiting for about two hours on making a LAN interface for watching our reviews. The updates will resume shortly.

November 15, 1998
You make this possible. Expect at least two new maps.

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Why Half-Life will NOT be the top multiplayer game in 1999

The *Unreal* editor is still the most intuitive editor on the market.

1. EVEN THOUGH IT'S BETTER THAN ANYTHING ELSE ON THE MARKET, THE MARKET IS FAR TOO OVERCROWDED

Perhaps the most difficult thing for a game developer to do in today's marketplace is capture and hold a gaming audience. And this task is particularly difficult in the first-person shooter genre. It seems that just about every month a big new shooter hits the shelves with technology that leapfrogs over the last. To make matters worse, those with the best potential (such as *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Daikotana*, and *Quake III Arena*) are on indeterminate schedules, meaning that they could come at any moment.

This is a clear threat to the long-term success of *Half-Life*. Sure it is one of the most played online games at this moment, but what happens when *Aliens vs. Predator* or another marquee title hits the market? The game could very well get swept under the carpet.

For an example of this, just check out the online status of *Sin*. Despite its solid design and unique multiplayer levels, this title was all but abandoned when *Half-Life* hit stores. To find out why *Sin*

2. IT DIDN'T SHIP WITH THE EASY-TO-USE UNREAL EDITOR

Even though *Worldcraft 2.0* is a fine editing tool that many hardcore level editors love, it has not caught the imagination of the average player nearly as much as the *Unreal* editor did when it was released. Perception is almost as important as reality when developing a community, and it's taking much longer for the *Half-Life* level building community to develop than it did for the *Unreal* level editing community.

3. IT'S FACING TOUGH COMPETITION FROM TEAMPLAY GAMES

Even though *Half-Life* offers great traditional deathmatch play, it only offers traditional deathmatch play. *Rainbow Six* merely whet the appetites of online gamers for more teamplay. Many of those who have played teamplay are growing tired of the traditional kill fest and are looking elsewhere for their online contest thrill.

If users invest time in creating *Half-Life* teamplay mods it will still

underperformed in terms of sales, see the boxout at the bottom right corner of this page.
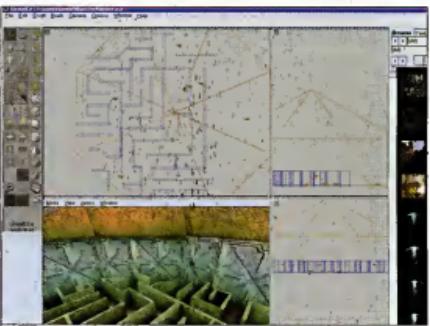
be okay, but considering that most people who do this are just waiting for *Team Fortress*, it seems unlikely that many amateur teamplay mods will ever take off.

4. IT'S BASED ON QUAKE II

While this is certainly an advantage on some fronts, *Half-Life*'s tie to *Quake II* could damage it when games such as *Quake III Arena*, *Unreal 2* and the *Rainbow Six* sequel hit stores. Even though it is an advancement, it could still get lumped together in the old *Quake II*-based games category, when the next sparkling technology hits.

5. IT'S BUILDING UP TO TEAM FORTRESS

Let's face it, *Half-Life*'s shipping multiplayer element was thrown in at the end of development. With *Team Fortress* coming soon, the real multiplayer focus was already in the works, but Valve showed that it had some neat ideas that it wanted in place, ready for the expansion pack.

Quickstart Internet games and a myriad of servers are in place, but those eight levels will disappear from the radar, along with the simpler FFA deathmatch when *Team Fortress* ships. ➤

100   0   0   5

Half-Life deathmatch should still be played long into 1999.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY: THE HALF-LIFE EDITION

So you've finished the incredible single-player *Half-Life* storyline and now you're looking for a little more competition? It's time you jumped online and see how good you are against some *real* competition, but before you go, here's a look at the competition that you'll be facing. The further down the list you go, the more deadly your opponent.

THE PANICKING FOOL

WEAPON OF CHOICE: The crowbar (he really has no choice)
TYPICAL QUOTE: "Please, please don't kill me"
PLAYING STYLE: Runs around like an idiot presenting a target and distraction for better players
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Don't think about it too hard, he'll usually find a way to kill himself. The real key is making sure that you get the frag before he offs himself, or stumbles upon one of your opponents.
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: The Hivehand (watching him get chased around by mad alien hornets is loads of fun)
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Hudson from Aliens

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Give him the false hope that he just might kill you, and then end his life
DECAL OF CHOICE: "Don't Panic" (A reminder to himself)

THE ANARCHIST

WEAPON OF CHOICE: Tripwire mines
TYPICAL QUOTE: "Follow me"
PLAYING STYLE: Regular traps are secondary to trapping unaware opponents in devious traps
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Keep your eyes open. Anarchists love setting tripwire mines on every blind corner. Also be careful chasing him anywhere, he's most likely leading you into a dangerous area
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: Grenades or satchel charges can be used to disarm his tripwire mines from a safe distance
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Data from The Goonies

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Disarm his traps, even when you don't really need to
DECAL OF CHOICE: Calvin (The scheming version)

THE CAMPER

WEAPON OF CHOICE: The Firehose of Death (Egon)
TYPICAL QUOTE: "I'm not camping, I just got here "
PLAYING STYLE: Stalks around like a coward waiting for unarmed players to spawn
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Learn where he hides and track him down. This cowardly foe will try to hit you as soon as you spawn, so be prepared and if he gets you once, return to the same spot with greater firepower, he will likely still be there
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: Use his own Egon against him and enjoy the satisfying pop as he explodes in a bloody mess
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Jason Voorhees from Friday the 13th 1-8

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Inform the rest of the players where this camping idiot is located
DECAL OF CHOICE: Tent (So he can remember where to go)

THE SNIPER

WEAPON OF CHOICE: Crossbow (secondary fire)
TYPICAL QUOTE: "Head shot! "
PLAYING STYLE: Moves around in the shadows, picking off opponents at a distance (not to be confused with camping)
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Keep moving at all times, beware of open areas, and if you locate this sniper try to get as close as possible, his long range weapons are ineffective against close attack
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: If you can't get close, take him out from a distance with the LAW
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Private Jackson from Saving Private Ryan

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Dance around in open areas. It's risky, but if he can't hit you, he'll be pissed and waste ammo
DECAL OF CHOICE: "Look Out Behind You" (Good advice)

THE AVENGING ANGEL

WEAPON OF CHOICE: Tau Cannon
TYPICAL QUOTE: "No one does that to me!"
PLAYING STYLE: Takes frags personally. Focuses on those who've killed them, pursuing vengeance over total victory
HOW TO BEAT HIM: If you've made him mad, you've got trouble, he'll chase you to the ends of the earth to get revenge. Spare yourself the distraction and give the baby his bottle. Then get back to work
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: Use the weapon you killed him with the first time, he'll be more satisfied with his revenge that way
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Angel from Avenging Angel

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Use the old counter-vendetta. Killing him over and over will fuel his rage
DECAL OF CHOICE: Skull and crossbones

THE PATTERN RUNNER

WEAPON OF CHOICE: Combat Rifle
TYPICAL QUOTE: "Get out of my way"
PLAYING STYLE: Learns every inch of a map and runs precise patterns to all the best weapons
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Learn the route. If he's going to follow a path, figure out where he's going and set up an ambush. Either you will break his pattern or take him down time and again
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: Good timing and a fully charged Tau cannon, backed by Claymores on his route
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Arnold Schwarzenegger from The Running Man

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Get him out of his rhythm. Set tripwire traps all over his patterns
DECAL OF CHOICE: "No Standing"

THE POWDER KEG

WEAPON OF CHOICE: LAW (rocket launcher)
TYPICAL QUOTE: "Ha, you blew you real good"
PLAYING STYLE: Prefers explosive weaponry and making things go "boom"
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Fight from a distance. Rockets can be dodged if you have enough time, and in a long distance battle, sniper weapons have a distinct advantage
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: The crossbow is the best long distance weapon to pop this guy
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Joe Pesci from Goodfellas

HOW TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: Fight at close range where he more likely to accidentally kill himself
DECAL OF CHOICE: The Bomb

THE ICEMAN

WEAPON OF CHOICE: He uses them all
TYPICAL QUOTE: "..." (He's too busy killing)
PLAYING STYLE: Adapting to the existing conditions and doing whatever it takes to win
HOW TO BEAT HIM: Join him. The poly way to beat the top Half-Life players is to become one yourself. Learn to balance weapons, learn the levels, and learn to stay calm in a fire fight
WEAPON TO USE AGAINST HIM: Know them all, because you can't beat him otherwise
ACTION MOVIE EQUIVALENT: Clint Eastwood from any movie he's been in

TO MAKE HIM ANGRY: He's too cool, just make sure he doesn't get you out of your game
DECAL OF CHOICE: "Please do not write on the walls"

NEWS YOU CAN TRUST FROM PEOPLE YOU SHOULDN'T

In the Eye of the Storm

Does the mass exodus at Ion Storm mean the end of this once promising developer? Or is it a whole new beginning?

Ever since John Romero, Warren Spectre, Tom Hall, and Todd Porter first formed high-profile Ion Storm, the industry has been watching, waiting for something big. Well something big finally happened: Nine members of Ion Storm departed the company in one week. All but two of the departed members came from Romero's *Daikatana* team. When the news hit, people assumed that *Daikatana* and Ion Storm were in dire straits. We went right to the top, JOHN ROMERO, to find out exactly what, if any, effect these changes will have on future Ion Storm products.

PCXL: What effect will these departures have on the oft-delayed release of *Daikatana*?

ROMERO: A new team is in place and just about all trained and ready to go. We figure the game will be slightly delayed from its original March release date.

PCXL: What kind of changes are the new team bringing?

ROMERO: The new guys are great. They are bringing a lot of positive energy. And it also helps to get rid of the negativity of the departed staff members.

Daikatana and Romero are still alive, despite appearances.

PCXL: How do you feel about the departures personally?

ROMERO: The whole thing was very unprofessional. I mean, first off they don't finish what they started — and then throwing up that statement online. There was never any dialogue with us about whether that would be OK.

PCXL: What do you think of their new project at Bloodshot?

ROMERO: (loud laugh) I'm not going to say what everybody is thinking (laugh again).

We also had a chance to grill TOM HALL on the progress and status of the much-anticipated *Anachronox*.

PCXL: How do the losses effect *Anachronox*? Is it still on track?

THE RUMOR MILL

Here is a quick rundown of the rumors that circulated about the reasons for the departures from Ion Storm. We don't believe them, and no qualified sources backed up any of them up. But hey, they are just rumors.

→ All hated working for Todd Porter
→ No good lunch places by office
→ Fear of failure
→ Unnatural obsession with 'Boss giant rock became a problem
→ Were tired of superstars Romero, Porter, Spectre, and Hall getting all the money and attention
→ Psychic Friends Network said it was "their destiny"
→ Couldn't handle expectations
→ Just wanted to see Romero fail flat on his face
→ Couldn't handle the truth!
→ Couldn't handle constant PCXL jokes about Ion Storm

HALL: Yeah, the game should ship as scheduled depending on the marketing types. It'll be done — it's just a matter of putting it out when they want to.

PCXL: What was the mood at Ion Storm after the mass exodus?

HALL: When it all went down it was like, whoa. And it was a bit depressing, but now that we've moved forward it has gotten very positive around the offices.

PCXL: What do you make of the comment "Ion Storm isn't conducive to making games"?

HALL: I don't get that. I love working here. Maybe they didn't enjoy it, and that is their opinion, but everyone here really likes what we're doing. It just depends on your perspective.

With the replacements made we expect both games will suffer only slight delays. But contrary to public opinion, PCXL believes that both of these games will live up to their considerable hype.

FANTASY FRAG

VALENTINE'S DAY

WHY WE HATE IT → A day devoted to love, affection, and other sissy endeavors just ain't our idea of a holiday. If you are in a relationship, it means kissing ass and doing girl things; if you're single, it's a day created especially to make you feel like a miserable loser. The only people who enjoy this holiday are women with devoted man-slaves who buy them flowers, chocolates, and diamonds. For the rest of us it ranks just above Judgment Day, and barely.

HOW IT SHOULD BE FRAGGED → All men the world over should stand strong and veto this holiday, and maybe Hallmark, chocolate companies, and diamond hawkers would leave us in the hell alone. Of course, any man who dares make this stand should prepare for a date Valentine's Day next year. But if there must be a Valentine's Day, then there should at least be a **MALENTINE'S DAY** solely for us (for full details on Malentine's Day, check out page 124).

THE POWER METER

It's a whole new year and everyone covets the top spot for '99. Who will be this year's Redstorm, Valve, or Monolith? Only time will tell.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	
1	6	**MICROSOFT** → *Combat Simulator*, *Rise of Rome*, and *Age of Empires* are all in the top ten. Damn those Microsofties!
2	1	**SIERRA** → *Half-Life* is failing to outsell *Tomb Raider III*, proving there is no justice.
3		**VALVE** → *Half-Life* is better than the hype, and now Valve's hiring.
4		**GT INTERACTIVE** → *Deer Hunter II* proves that people really are "that" stupid. *Unreal Tournament* and *Wheel of Time* prove GT still publishes good games as well.
5	4	**ELECTRONIC ARTS** → Francchises keep rolling and now EA is tapping into the action market with *Point Man* and *Future Cop*.
6		**LUCASARTS** → The two promised top-secret prequel games should make for a prosperous year.
7		**HASBRO** → Newly purchased *X-COM* and *Mech-Warrior* are newsworthy but the *Monopoly* game is likely to outsell them both
8	10	**3DFX** → Voodoo 3 will prove once again why 3Dfx is the top dog in the 3D card market.
9	5	**MONOLITH** → The only developer in the free world that actually releases good games on time.
10	7	**REDSTORM** → *Rainbow Six* remains in PC Data's top 10 a very impressive.

OTHER CONTENDERS:

TAKE TWO INTERACTIVE → This up-and-coming publisher has teamed with proven developers like DMA Design and Dein-phine to try to make a mark in the industry. They also have rights to the promising *Spec Ops 2*.

PSYGNOSIS → *Drakan* looks hot (and so does the model), *Hired Guns* looks promising, and a truck-load of other games are on the way.

SURPRISES:

ION STORM → Nine key developers left and only one (bad) game was released; people are really starting to doubt that Ion Storm is for real. *Daikatana* will prove it is.

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

RYNN

We've already featured *Drakan*'s Rynn in our Women We Love to Play section, but after a photo session with her real-life counterpart, we decided that February was going to be Rynn's month once again. Maybe it's the fact that some avid gamers that we still haven't picked up our jaws off the floor after seeing her. In any case, whatever the case, she's back in this section and welcome to return anytime she wants.

On a side note, if you think models are not as beautiful in real life as they are in pictures, Mirna Blanke steinwhateverhernameis will prove you wrong. Dubious PCXL staffers attended her latest photo shoot and were left nearly speechless by the 20-year-old model. Our art director, Q!, described her best, but unfortunately we were not able to hear what he was saying on account of his heavy drooling. Just know that in this case the real thing is even better than the image.

OTHER CHARACTERS AND THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS

LARA CROFT compared with **THE REAL LARA**

SIMILARITIES—} Both look the same, both have English accents

DIFFERENCES—} Real-life Lara's breasts grow with each version. The digital Lara's just keep getting smaller.

ELEXIS SINCLAIR compared with **LINDA FIORENTINO**

SIMILARITIES—} Both are smoldering black-haired beauties with a cork side

DIFFERENCES—} Elexis stars in a game called Sin, Fiorentino stars in movies about sin

ALLISON HUXTER compared with **ANNA NICOLE SMITH**

SIMILARITIES—} Both have a lot "up there" but not a lot up "up there"

DIFFERENCES—} One is a washed up has-been and the other is a never-will-be

DEMI MOORE EARLY compared with **DEMI MOORE LATE**

SIMILARITIES—} Both share the same name

DIFFERENCES—} Approximately 48 pounds of silicone gel

Chick flicks are those movies the women in our lives insist we watch. This is a special tribute and some new game information as well.

WARZONE 2100

DEVELOPER—} Pumpkin Studios
PUBLISHER—} Eidos Interactive
RELEASE DATE—} Q2 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE—} *Fried Green Tomatoes*

THE DETAILS—} A realtime strategy game with scope including more than 2,000 different units to create and control.

TOUCHING MOMENT—} You are busy building the perfect tank in your laboratory and the enemy crashes through your flank defenses.

SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE—} It's tough for a real-time strategy game to stand out these days, and *Warzone 2100* isn't very flashy.

STARRING—} Kathy Bates as a gruff but lovable tank commander.

REVENANT

DEVELOPER—} Cinematix
PUBLISHER—} Eidos
RELEASE DATE—} Q1 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE—} *It Takes Two (Games That Look Exactly Like Diablo)*

THE DETAILS—} Think *Diablo*, and you have this game half figured out. It's your standard isometric view, fantasy, RPG-ish action game.

TOUCHING MOMENT—} You actually try to read the back story and your eyes tear up with boredom.

SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE—} It looks like *Diablo*, it tastes like *Diablo*, but *Diablo* is two years old.

STARRING—} Melissa Gilbert as the warrior woman whose baby is stolen by out-of-work trolls.

PC ACCELERATOR February 1999 In case you're curious, cover model Mirna failed to find the PCXL staff funny or charming

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PC ACCELERATOR February 1999

GAMESCAN

DARKSTONE

DEVELOPER-> Delphine
PUBLISHER-> Take Two
RELEASE DATE-> Q2 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE-> *You've Got Chain Mail*
THE DETAILS-> Drakk, the evil ruler of earth, must be stopped, and you're just the RPG fanatic to do it in Delphine's first foray into the realm of fantasy adventure.
TOUCHING MOMENT-> The simultaneous control of two characters leaves plenty of moments for a brave knight to risk his life for the precious wizardess.
SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE-> It's trying to prove that RPGs don't have to be ugly 2D games anymore.
STARRING-> Meg Ryan as a chipper young shop owner whose head is lopped off by a crack-fiend adventurer looking for the perfect plate of armor.

REDLINE

DEVELOPER-> Beyond Games
PUBLISHER-> Accolade
RELEASE DATE-> February '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE-> *The Color Red*
THE DETAILS-> It's a racer/shooter that lets you steal cars and use them against your opponents in a futuristic land.
TOUCHING MOMENT-> Your character jumps out of a car, pops a cap into his opponent's head, and steals his ride. It's enough to make you all teary-eyed.
SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE-> *Redline* straddles the racer and shooter genres, which is usually difficult to sell.
STARRING-> Tina Turner as the queen of the road warriors.

The Heat-O-Meter
THE SEX EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

NEW GENRE?-> The National Institute on Media for the Family recently reported on the condition of the game industry. Its report admonished titles that were (and we quote) "kill-for-fun murder simulations." Now why didn't we think of that genre?

FORCE BE WITH YOU-> The *Star Wars* prequel trailer finally made it to the theaters. Yoda sounds like Super Rover and Samuel Jackson never says, "Use the force, motherf*cker," or "And you will know my name is Jedi when I lay my vengeance upon thee." Despite this, the hype has begun in a very large way.

AND ALSO WITH YOU-> Red Storm recently announced *Force 21*, an all-new 3D real-time war game. Players can choose to pick up the role of either a U.S. or Chinese armored company. We hope this is Red Storm's way of apologizing for the disastrous *Dominant Species*.

BARBIE ON TOP-> Mattel uber babe Barbie is riding high on the PC Data charts with titles at No. 1 and No. 2. Now maybe we'll get a chance to see that long-awaited *Unreal* engine Barbie first-person shooter. Die, Skipper, die!

WHAT'S COLD

RISING GQ-> A new helmet peripheral from UR Gear features built-in speakers, a microphone, and almost 100% compatibility with games. However, the geek quotient is so high no one will ever put the damn thing on.

GOD-AWFUL-> The nine people who left Ion Storm formed a game company called Bloodshot. The new company's first title to be published by GOD is *Kiss Psycho Circus*, based on the Todd MacFarlane comic about the glam rock band Kiss. This will mark the first time GOD has ever been on Kiss' side.

GOD DAMMIT-> Insomniac Entertainment's title *The Creed* was recently refused by publisher EA because of foul language — EA should have heard what the developers were saying when they heard the news.

MAN OF THE YEAR-> Ion Storm's long-haired head honcho was being considered for *Time* Man of the Year. The fact that his entire staff left the company now places him just below Bill Clinton, Ester Rolle, and Robert Downey Jr.

PREHISTORIC DENTAL-> WizardWorks recently released *Deer Hunter* spin-off *Carnivore Hunter*, which allows gamers to hunt prehistoric creatures. Finally a theme to match the graphics — prehistoric.

PCXL GLOSSARY — WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?

In our effort to accurately inform you about the latest in the PC games industry, we sometimes find English short on words that fully describe the games and women we cover.

To address these obvious shortcomings, we were forced to take some poetic license with the language. Here is a short list of terms we've used and what they really mean. Feel free to use these words in your prose or conversation, but always be sure to footnote from where they came.

PRETTIFY-> Technical term for making things pretty.

Often used to describe technical mumbo jumbo that simpletons, like us, just don't get.

OHNOSECOND-> That moment when you first encounter a giant otherworldly beast. Other terms: *Pants-wetter*, *pants-soiler*, and *ohohhosecona*.

UGLIFY-> Term used to describe things that are made horribly grotesque and ugly.

FUNKIFY-> In the same family of words as *prettify* and *uglify*, this term is used to describe something that makes someone or something suddenly groovy in an Earth,

Wind, and Fire '70s type of way.

SUCKTITUDE-> Sucking in a big way. Even worse than sucks ass.

EXTREME SUCKTITUDE-> The ultimate suckage. *Extreme sucktitude* is reserved for only the most heinous of those that suck.

SUCKAGE-> Of or being a thing that sucks.

EYE-CANDIFIED-> See *prettify*.

BAD MF-> Short for Millennium Falcon. Originated because none of us can consistently spell *millennium* correctly.

Also term for any character played by Samuel L. Jackson.

BREATH-> The Jurassic spelling of the word *breathe*, used only when talking about dinosaurs or any other time we missed it.

BILINEAR MIP-BUMP-MAP-STUFFING-> Jumbled techno jargon that in reality means nothing. This is used to satirize geeky tech heads.

SAUSALITAN-> The language spoken by those who live in Sausalito.

BLOW-UPABLE-> A word to describe things that can be blown up.

ASS COLA-> Derogatory term for Pepsi.

If you've found other words that defy description and simply can't be found in Webster's dictionary, just send them to those wordsaremadeup @pcxl.com. The person who finds the most gets a free game. Of course, we are always on the lookout for new words, so if you've got some juicy descriptors, send them to newwords @pcxl.com. The coiner of the best word receives a free game and will have the word forever entered in the PCXL glossary (once we find it, that is).

GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN

THE WAR HAS JUST BEGUN ...

Several months ago we asked you, our faithful readers, to take our circulation efforts into your own hands, and the response was tremendous. In the short time after the issue hit newsstands, we began receiving responses to our challenge as readers proudly displayed our magazine up front and center. The ideas ranged from placing our magazines in front of the naked-lady publications to plastering an entire Electronics Boutique display with our third issue, but we think you can do even better. The two winners of the former contest have already been sent fabulous prizes consisting of too many games to list and brand-new joysticks. In the future, we will award more creative prizes to those with more creative solutions.

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS TO GET YOU THINKING ...

→ Model your girlfriend in a bikini made out of PCXL covers
→ Commit a heinous crime and mention us during your exclusive "60 Minutes" interview
→ Call Doctor Lara and say you are addicted to the new drug PCXL
→ Create a PCXL tribute website
→ Start a fight on "Jerry Springer" using PCXL as a weapon
→ Flash the magazine on camera as Jack Kevorkian tapes the death of your grandmother

→ Dig up a 100-year time capsule buried in 1900 and insert a copy of PCXL
→ Tape a lovemaking session with Pamela Anderson Lee that prominently displays the magazine (or not)
→ During the Super Bowl run naked onto the field with PCXL painted on your butt

PCXL will not be responsible for any deaths, jail time, or ill will caused by the aforementioned harebrained schemes.

Ninety-Five Percent of Games Now AAA Titles

"What a great time to be a PC gamer," beams industry analyst

With game revenues increasing and more and more people buying PCs every year, the PC game industry seems to be in great shape. But the exact extent of this healthy state was not fully appreciated until the results of PCXL's rigorous independent study were revealed.

According to PCXL's estimations, yesterday's announcement of another AAA title, Post-Apocalyptic Future by developer Hot Diggity Games, has officially pushed the proportion of AAA titles to an impressive 95%. "A triple-A game is one that is superlative, outstanding, rising above the sea of mediocrity," said veteran industry analyst Ned Nederlander. "For 95% of games to be announced as AAA is definitely a positive sign."

Added Nederlander, "Diagnosis: AAA-OK."

The AAA status of Post-Apocalyptic Future was confirmed by Hot Diggity's press release, which read: "Hot Diggity Games is pleased to bring another AAA title to the shores of America from its native Germany. Drive over fully 3D terrain while reveling in the 3D special effects! Writhe in delight at the pounding techno soundtrack! Post-Apocalyptic Future: it's the bomb!"

Encino Studios, best known for its Destroy & Demolish franchise of realtime strategy games, has helped achieve this. PR guru Mitch Mitchman remarked, "We have a rigorous quality control setup that makes sure every last "A" is accounted for."

Some developers, however, expressed the sentiment that "we can do better." "I'm not satisfied with only 95% of games being AAA," said the president of developer Plasma Blast. "The hardcore gamers won't rest until a full 100% of games are AAA, and I, for one, intend to bring this to them."

As always, turn to PCXL for the news shaping your world.

SLAVE ZERO

PUBLISHER→ Accolade
DEVELOPER→ Accolade
RELEASE DATE→ Q2 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE→ Terms of Enslavement

THE DETAILS→ A large-scale shooter that focuses on big-ass blomechs wreaking havoc in a lively environment. All the action takes place in a city that is fully populated by cars, people to be thrown against walls, and buildings just begging to be smashed.

TOUCHING MOMENT→ An irate driver honks at your Slave and you answer by smashing her Pinto into the subway below.

SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE→ No matter how good this game looks, people will always measure it against the highly enjoyable Slave. Less than Zero.

STARRING→ Bette Midler as the irate, but lovable, driver.

OUTCAST

PUBLISHER→ Infogrames
DEVELOPER→ Appeal
RELEASE DATE→ April '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE→ Pretty in Voxels

THE DETAILS→ A futuristic fantasy adventure set in an absolutely gorgeous voxel-based world filled with amazing creatures.

TOUCHING MOMENT→ You stop to admire the beautifully rendered landscape and get eaten by a beautifully rendered primordial monster.

SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE→ The game is software-rendered only, which many people equate with extreme ugliness (though that clearly is wrong).

STARRING→ The also futuristic and curvy Jane Fonda (Barbarella version only, please).

GAMESCAN

WILD METAL COUNTRY

PUBLISHER→ Take Two Interactive
DEVELOPER→ DMA Design
RELEASE DATE→ Q2 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE→ *Wild Steel Magnolias*

THE DETAILS→ Gameplay is first in this multiplayer tank battle that requires precise control and aim. The intuitive shooting and aiming interface looks to be a real advancement in gameplay.

TOUCHING MOMENT→ Your lovable tank is bombarded by hordes of angry opponents. Dying is always the saddest of moments.

SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE→ The graphics are nice but the game isn't as detailed as other RTS games heading out soon. Is it enough these days just to be good?

STARRING→ Everyone's favorite munchkin, Sally Fields, plays the courageous mother who takes on the world.

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

PUBLISHER→ EA
DEVELOPER→ Bullfrog
RELEASE DATE→ March '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE→ *How Harry Got His Groove Back*

THE DETAILS→ It's more of the same *Dungeon Keeper* action, but with improved multiplayer performance and better graphics.

TOUCHING MOMENT→ You raise a chicken from a tiny hatchling, nurture it through the early stages of life, protect it, and then feed it to a hungry demon of hell. There won't be a dry eye in the house.

SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE→ The first game was much loved, but is the second improved enough to keep the old fans and gain new ones to boot?

STARRING→ Starring Janet Reno as the Devil's henchwoman.

The Village People formed because a producer saw a fully outfitted Indian dancing in a club

---

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

TRUST US, THIS IS GAME-RELATED ... BUT HOW?

During our in-depth research on *Team Fortress 2*, we ran across a disturbing fact: The GI JOE TEAM was modeled after the '70s disco band known as the Village People. If you don't believe us, check it out for yourself. If you can spot the cunning and sneaky link between this story and games, then send an email to ihaveseenthelight@pcxl.com for a suitably game-related prize.

SOLDIER	
SHIPWRECK PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Water-based warfare	**ALEX BRILEY** PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Getting down with his bad self
CONSTRUCTION WORKER	
TOLLBOOTH PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Driving the bridge layer	**DAVID HODO** PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Wearing a hard hat, and we think he played the tambourine
COP	
MUTT PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Military police officer	**RAY SIMPSON** PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Writing tickets for failure to funkify
COWBOY	
WILD BILL PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Helicopter Pilot	**JEFF OLSON** PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Forming the "A" in *YMCA*, which is clearly the toughest letter
BIKER	
RIPPER PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Vandalism	**GLENN HUGHES** PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Adding the necessary "grit" to the band
INDIAN	
SPIRIT PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Tracker	**FELIPE ROSE** PRIMARY FUNCTION→ Smokin' the peace pipe and providing politically incorrect Native American imagery

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MALENTINE'S DAY

Sorry Jenny, Malentine's day is strictly for men.

Anyone who is in a relationship realizes that Valentine's Day isn't really for couples; the whole damn holiday is meant to please women. That's all well and good, but what about us?

What about our needs? To this end PCXL would like to propose Malentine's Day. It would be June 14, and would feature the things we truly love (beer, sports, sex, and so on). On our special day, the lady of our life would buy us copious amounts of liquor, tickets to a big game, and some cool electronic gadget, then she would

get the hell out of our way as we proceeded to get drunk and make fools of ourselves.

You laugh at such a foolish notion, but at PCXL we firmly believe Malentine's Day can become a holiday. After all, the key to creating new holidays is coming up with a sound marketing plan. Here is that plan ...

SPONSORSHIPS
→ Miller Beer (or other suitably wealthy and willing beer sponsor)
→ Absolut (for an Absolutely

perfect Malentine's Day)
→ Circuit City (a holiday about giving electronic gadgets — why wouldn't it be a sponsor?)
→ PCXL (it was our idea)
→ *Playboy* (O.K., we just want to be involved with *Playboy* in some way or another)

Special note: Any of the above sponsors, or other interested parties that want to help us create this holiday, please email us at newtonourownday dammit@pcxl.com.

FREE STUFF WE GOT!

DIAMOND RIO

W ell, it took a while but we wanted to get more cool stuff in response to our appeal for freebies. The latest acquisition: a sharp little gizmo known as the Diamond Rio. This portable handheld device enables you to download MP3s from the Internet and create your own mix of songs. Diamond assures us that the player was created for those who want to download legal (read: crap) songs off the Internet, but the real reason people want to get it is for the illegal MP3s on the Web.

When we received the Rio, we immediately went to the first legal (wink) website we could find and downloaded files that were cleared (nudge) for Internet transfer. The legal (knowing glance) songs played perfectly on the device even though we couldn't find the good songs (sly smile) from bands like Foo Fighters, Korn, and the Beastie Boys.

What makes the Rio even better is that it allows you to take songs from your own CDs, change them to MP3 format, and then make a

A special note to our readers: We accept gifts from absolutely everyone. Whether it's a T-shirt from your uncle's greasy spoon, a photograph of your roommate's girlfriend, or simply a Porsche from your father's car dealership, we willingly accept them all.

song mix on the device. This way you don't have to listen to "I Write the Songs" on your Barry Manilow's Greatest Hits album just to hear "Mandy." And you know we love "Mandy" (barf, wink, twitch).

The technical specs are impressive. It stores up to 60 minutes of

music and is about the size of a deck of cards; a single AA battery provides 12 hours of continuous play. The player comes with 32MB of built-in flash memory, which can be expanded with $50 flash memory cards. The entire unit will retail for just under $200, but we got it free.

GOODBYE, CARRIE

I s it just us or does this magazine seem cursed? Before we even started work on last month's issue, we were told that our managing editor, the key staff member who ensures that our often-anarchic writing is eventually readable, would be leaving.

CARRIE SHEPHERD announced that she had had enough of gaming magazines and instead was dedicating her life to fighting crime.

"This was a tough decision, but the world needs me right now more than you guys do," she said, moments before jumping out of our second-story window.

Carrie's plans for the future include wearing a costume modeled after the Mas-

sachusetts state flag, buying a slightly opaque jet airplane, and wrangling villains with her magical lasso of good grammar. Carrie has been in possession of the magical lasso of good grammar for quite some time, but was continually distressed to find that it was powerless on some (OK, all) of the PCXL staff. Despite their intense sadness at Carrie's departure, the staff

Carrie and Rupee were always very close — a little too close if you ask us. That dirty little minx.

members said they would continue on. Editor in Chief Mike Salmon said it best: "We don't knead no stoopid managin' editor. We rite gud enuff on our own." She'll be missed, but we must carry on.

MORTYR

PUBLISHER–> Interactive Magic
DEVELOPER–> Mirage
RELEASE DATE–> Q2 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE–> Evening Harvest
THE DETAILS–> The beautiful art direction gives this game a unique look, despite the fact that it is a first-person shooter that doesn't use a licensed engine.
TOUCHING MOMENT–> You cruise your character through a Nazi temple and destroy priceless stained glass windows just 'cuz.
SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE–> There are far too many first-person shooters with better technology and graphics and much bigger budgets.
STARRING–> Shirley MacLaine as the psychic prisoner of war with a heart of gold (and really bad hair).

AGE OF EMPIRES 2: THE AGE OF KINGS

PUBLISHER–> Microsoft
DEVELOPER–> Ensemble Studios
RELEASE DATE–> Q4 '99
CHICK FLICK TITLE–> Endless Log
THE DETAILS–> The much-awaited sequel to Age of Empires is on its way, sporting a graphics overhaul, better multiplayer, and improvements to the awful pathfinding AI.
TOUCHING MOMENT–> You build a happy civilization in which the arts are encouraged and your people reach cultural awakenings heretofore unseen. And then you're wiped out by the Mongol hordes.
SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE–> What obstacles? This is Age of Empires we're talking about — they could slap a "2" sticker on the original box and people would still buy it in droves.
STARRING–> Brooke Shields as the Queen of France, who likes to frolic naked while invading tiny third-world countries.

DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT

Devil's Thumb Entertainment

When i first walked into the offices of Devil's Thumb Entertainment (DTE) in Boulder, Colo., I was a little perplexed. After all, I've seen the insides of dozens of game developers' offices — where were all the soda cans, bags of chips, and pizza boxes?

Then I met company president Anthony Harman and learned a few things. First, most of the team members working on *Hired Guns* had gone home at 6 a.m. to shower and freshen up before I showed up (showers appreciated, guys). Second, Tony, as he prefers to be called, had everyone tidy up the place as well (several employees had just put away their sleeping bags). Third, the company vending machine was stocked with such game developer staples as Jolt, Hot Fries, and Pop Tarts. And last, a couple of the desks were covered with *Star Wars* toys.

All this assured me that I was indeed in a game developer's office — if perhaps one slightly more professional in appearance than is the norm. The 30-plus company members live, breath (the *Jurassic* spelling), and eat games, for sure. However, they also like to be seen as serious about their games.

Tony (co-founder and vice president of development) and Brian

Currently, Devil's Thumb operates on a 6-by-8 plot of grass. Someday they hope to work out of a van.

Look at them tiny tchotchkes. Boy they're tiny. Aren't they? Slick (above) agrees!

Ullrich (his associate in founding) met at Nintendo of America, where they worked for eight years. In January of 1996 they left and formed the U.S. offices of DMA Design (creator of *Lemmings*).

When Gremlin bought DMA in '97, Tony and Brian opted to stay independent, and Devil's Thumb Entertainment was born. The corporate mantra in a nutshell: Stay small, and provide an environment in which employees are rewarded for their contributions, chiefly with profit-sharing and royalties. DTE does its own music and animation in-house, which is somewhat unusual for a small company, but Tony believes it will translate into better games in the long run because everyone is intimately involved in making them.

DTE signed with publisher GT Interactive, and their first game was *Mike Piazza's Strike Zone* for the N64, followed recently with a high-seas pirate adventure for lower-end PCs called *Tides of War*. Unhappy with its relationship with GT (it felt GT rushed the development process, and DTE still has

not received final copies of either game), Devil's Thumb signed up with publisher Psygnosis.

DTE is one of many developers licensing the *Unreal* engine; the agreement sprung from DMA Design's relationship with Tim Sweeny at Epic. DTE felt that the *Unreal* editor put game design in the hands of the designers, not programmers. Other engines, such as the *Quake II* engine, were never considered.

Although there are always restrictions when you work with a licensed engine, Tony says, DTE was able to modify the engine to deliver a unique look and feel for *Hired Guns*. "DTE is very much on its own now with the *Unreal* engine, with the exception of the network code Epic is currently addressing," he adds. Interestingly, one of DTE's level designers is exploiting a bug in the *Unreal* engine to create some truly bizarre "cyberlevels" for *Hired Guns*.

The team members feel the *Unreal* engine and editor give them the most creative freedom possible short of making their own tools

(something they may decide to do later on). One thing is certain: Even when the graphics engine is provided, there is plenty of work to be done. We'll see if *Hired Guns* can be its own game or if it will merely be a total conversion of *Unreal*, like *Klingon Honor Guard*. My professional (and almost always correct) opinion is that *Hired Guns* is going to be much, much more. ➤

— STEVE KLETT is the only games journalist that lives in Colorado.

PCXL PREMIERE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Like other high-class societies, PCXL wants to give preferential treatment to the elite, and so is providing an application for Premiere status. Qualified readers will be entitled to the following: Babe-O-Rama Gold (more pictures, more skin), instant response to emails, first word on contests, ability to laugh at inside jokes, exemption from harsh criticism of letters, Dan's mom's phone number (for those that don't already have it), and the extreme power to ridicule those who aren't as fortunate as you. To qualify, simply send in your responses to Iknowmyshit@pcxl.com, or you can just cut out this form and send it to:

I don't have Internet access (therefore I am a loser)
c/o PC Accelerator Magazine
150 North Hill Drive
Brisbane, CA 94005

Upon qualification, you will receive a special email address, secret access to the website, and a list of people who weren't good enough (so you can mercilessly taunt them).*

* This is completely real. This is not a joke. We repeat, this is not a joke!

KNOWLEDGE AND LOYALTY QUESTIONS

1. In PCXL 1, which of the following nearly cost this game a spot in our Top 25 Guy Games?

❑ The voice of Mark Hamill
❑ The overuse of chaps
❑ The lack of brothels
❑ Cigar smoking

2. In PCXL 4, which picture was used to illustrate the curvy graphics in Quake III: Arena?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.

3. Match the PCXL statement with the actress candidates to play Lara Croft

A. Like Lara, horny men — as opposed to genetics — created her body
B. Already has the outfit, and we've got access to naked pictures
C. A bit butch for our liking
D. Going to need a padded bra and some toughening up

4. Which of these lovely vixens has not been a babe of the week on our website (www.pcxl.com)?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.

5. What was the caption in PCXL 2 that ran with this picture?

❑ Gate-crashing, a PCXL favorite, is essential in most medieval tomfoolery.
❑ Here, some librarians bitterly debate the Dewey decimal system.
❑ Federal law requires us to include screenshots of the game in every review.
❑ In this case, we actually considered the merits of a long prison sentence, rather than uglify our magazine.
❑ Your mother was a hamster and your father smelled of elderberries. Now go away before I taunt you a second time.

6. In PCXL 4, which jail babe got the highest rating? And for a bonus point which one is "very oral." If you know what she means?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.

7. In PCXL 4, which one of these fake screenshots represented the fictional game Scoring With Pamela and Tommy?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.
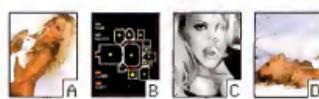
8. Who was managing editor for our last issue?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.

CHARACTER QUESTIONS

9. Which would you screw your best friend over for?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.

Either or both   Neither
C   D

10. Which magazine editor is the coolest?

❑ A.   ❑ B.   ❑ C.   ❑ D.

letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

→ Hurrah for babes. Hurrah for hilarious features. Hurrah for more babes. We don't have enough pages to fit all the glowing mail exuding our virtues, and we don't need to print them to make us look good. We know we're good (but we'd still like to hear it). Keep 'em coming.

LABOR LAWS?

Finally, a game magazine that fits my taste. I'm one of those guys who think that *Myst*, *Riven*, *Ultima Online*, and such are a waste of time and utter crap. Yours is the first magazine to make me laugh out loud. I am subscribing once I can get enough money. I wasted it all buying "B" games and I have yet to get a paycheck from my cheap boss. I must say, issue 4 is a really great one. Loved the QIII screenshots, too ... also, I'd like to work for you guys, but labor laws and my parents say "no." I love the reviews of jail babes, *Shogo*, and *Half-Life*. I do think that *Blood 2* is under-rated, but it's not enough to make me hate you.

— Psyclops

Are these the labor laws that prohibit one-eyed beasts from getting jobs? Ah well, we've got enough monsters in this office already.

KEEPIN' IT REAL

I'm planning on building my own dual PII 500MHz machine, truly a marvel of modern science — and thanks to the nice flowchart on page 46 of issue 4, I'm going to put in a Matrox Millennium G200 and an Obsidian 2 X-24. This system will truly rock the Casbah.

OK, keep it real, guys (and ladies).

— Nathan

Sounds like a killer system, but if you've been listening at all you would know that a TNT and Obsidian 2 X-24 is the best combination. Either way, that system won't have any problems with solitaire games.

WE WERE TESTING YOU

In your recent article "Ping-free Partying," *[November 1998]* you mention an IP address for the minimum of hassle; 192.0.2.x (yes, x is a number between 1 and 999, dummy) will ensure smooth connections between the various machines and your server."

First, if any of these nodes are on the Internet, you're going to be stepping on someone's registered subnet. The correct private address space in a Class B subnet (the 192 subnet) is 192.168.x.x. (Maybe you were thinking of the 10.0.0.0 public Class A subnet?)

Second, dummy, x can only be a number between 1 and 254, since 255 is the broadcast address for a Class C subnet, and there are only 8 bits per octet. The number 999 requires 10 bits. At least get your IP addressing correct before telling other people how to do it. And don't forget the correct subnet mask, or no one will be able to talk across your network.

By the way, I love your magazine, but you might need a better technical editor.

— Patrick

Clearly the Class B subnet, when juxtaposed with visions of D cups, leads to a random generation of numbers, which can't be explained. Seriously, we apologize for the slight error, and we feel truly sorry for anyone who actually knew it was a mistake.

AWARD-WINNING?

S2W is a group of hackers and PC videogame players. Starting this year, we are doing an award for best magazine of the year. Ten people go over the Internet to get all the free issues of magazines they can find; then, we take the best five, and 20 other people buy all of those current issues. Then we all vote on which is the best videogame magazine of the year. We choose the best magazine according to how many times we laugh during an issue, how many good games it reviews/previews, and other factors including favoritism. Anyway, 21 of the 30 people voted for **PCXL**, so your official rating is "DAMN IT! THIS MAG ROX!" Enjoy the award. Failure to print this letter or to just put part of it, like the "You Win" part, into the January or February Letters section will result in hackers messing with your system. Have a good year!

— S2WPrez (Ruler of S2W)

We'd like to thank the academy and all the little people. No, not the unimportant people, the little people. You know, munchkins, lilliputions, midgets, shorties, dwarves — that type. We'd also like to thank our parents for forming S2W and then voting us best mag of the year.

CARMEN VS. QUAKE III

I swear that if I don't subscribe, I'll start whining about it. Hilarious stuff. Anyhow, the, uh, *(pant)* *Quake III* article was a little eye-catching; it wouldn't surprise me if **PCXL** merged with Playboy.

We merge with Playboy nearly every month (if you know what we mean).

HIDDEN GAMES

I would like to say great magazine *[Editor's note: Go ahead, we don't mind]*, but I noticed something weird. On your Disc 19, I found a funny program. It's one of those desktop pets. This seriously can't be one of those "bigger, better, faster games" you guys are talking about. Better tell your disc editor to hold back on the vodka. Maybe you can make a contest to find hidden games on your CDs.

— Zhuo Yao Chen

We're actually going to send you his vodka; we just can't trust Ed when Russia's favorite beverage is around. As for our hidden games, we put them there to keep in touch with our feminine side.

PCXL IN THE CONSTITUTION?

All I have to say is screw the Man. It is our right to express our-

selves. Babe-O-Rama is nothing more than a homage to great things. Here are the facts why you shouldn't suppress it:

1) Freedom of speech is guaranteed thanks to the First Amendment. That includes all speech, art, photography, Babe-O-Rama.

2) It's the Net; there are no all-powerful rules governing it.

3) Worse things happen in the White House.

Thank you.

— Stealth

We had no idea that Babe-O-Rama was in the Constitution. That's cool. We've received thousands of emails from underexposed readers begging for the continuation of Babe-O-Rama at www.pcxl.com. And, as usual, **PCXL** is prepared to cave in to our readers' demands. The babes are back and we're gonna get in trouble.

CARRIE VS. LARA

G'day all. Finally a mag that doesn't get overexcited about dead boring lame strategy games, and also a mag that finally gives me what I want — pure hardcore gaming action and people that talk in a language I understand. I just wanted to tell you that your mag kicks arse over the crappy Australian computer mags — at least the demos work. I have told many of my friends over here in the land of Oz to start buying your magazine; keep up the great work. Oh, oh, I almost forgot that you should have more pics of Carrie Shepherd in the mag; she's better than Lara Croft any day! And unlike Lara, Carrie is a real woman, well she is, isn't she?

— Jason Gardiner

That's our new cover line: "PC Accelerator: Better than crappy Australian mags." As for Carrie, she is actually a cybernetic organism placed in our area by the government to study "strange" incidents that allegedly happen in our little corner. Sorry. But for a government droid she is pretty hot.

DEMONSTRATION #2:

1 Tear out your old sound card.

2 Smash into pieces.

3 Toss over your shoulder.

▶ The sound those pieces make when they hit the ground all *around* you is the power of A3D from Aureal, the only audio that works the way your ears do.

That's why leading sound card vendors, such as Diamond, TerraTec, Turtle Beach, and Xitel, are using Vortex audio technology from Aureal, the only 3D audio accelerator that supports industry leading A3D positional audio technology.

You can also find A3D positional audio on computer models from the industry's leading PC manufacturers.

Audio based on Aureal technology is awesome. But don't take our word for it. Believe Your Ears. Check out A3D at your local retailer.

A3D

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Bad Taste

Howard Stern's Private Parts

Something About Mary

Old David Letterman

Carmaggeddon II

PC accelerator
bigger, better, faster games

PC Accelerator

Good Taste

Martha Stewart's Living

Steel Magnolias

New David Letterman

Driver's Education '99

Other Magazines

We'll NEVER cross that line

Gaming 411

Follow these three easy steps to get all the product information you desire!

1. Go to: http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411
2. Select the product category from a complete list. Search by name, or select the vendor's number from the list below for up-to-date info on your favorite games.
3. Follow the format to receive all the info you desire. You will also be able to access the vendor's websites from Gaming 411.

These sponsors make it possible for **PC ACCELERATOR** to exist. If they make bad games, we'll slam them. If they make good games, then we'll praise them. Whether they advertise or not has absolutely no influence on our content — this we promise.

ADVERTISER INDEX

Enough with "Sci-Fi"

Don't get me wrong, I like science fiction as much as the next sniveling geek but enough is enough. With all this new fangled technology and fancy effects I expect something more. Currently gameplay innovations, merging genres, and new concepts are taking games to a new level. Yet it seems like every single one of these damn games is some sci-fi, post-apocalyptic or sci-fi fantasy bullshit. I want variety in theme and setup not another freakin' alien race.

Short on ideas? Look no further than the movie industry. Hell, the game industry has been stealing from them for years. I'm not suggesting that chick-flicks and romantic comedies would be good settings for a game but there are plenty of others that haven't been done (or at least done right). What about a good western? The last western game we saw was Outlaws, and it was awesome. Now with the new graphic technology and advancing interactivity this is the perfect time to branch into uncharted territories. Games like Nocturne and Kingpin are venturing into already proven ground with horror and mafia themes respectively. This is great. But I want more. The games that truly bring new experiences are those which present the gamer with something new to discover. And let's face it, sci-fi adventures are no longer new. If I see one more game about a dark future where cybernetic organisms and alien beasts have somehow captured us poor earthlings I may just vomit.

What Outlaws lacked in technology it made up for in story, setting and atmosphere.

Look at Deer Hunter. Sure it is big pile of steaming crap, but it offered something new and it sold like mad. Marketing guru's in this industry think that all gamers attend Comicon and Star Trek conventions and only like science fiction movies. This is false, release a good game with a new theme and the proof will be in the sales.

—Mike

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SECOND PERSON

When will you learn? It's no good to be a highly-respected Editor-in-Chief of the most happening PC games mag on the planet, and then go open your mouth and prove that you haven't sussed this gaming business. *Deer Hunter* selling because it offered something new? BS. It sold because it was cheap, it was strewn throughout Wal-Mart, had a bright orange box and a big deer with a target over it. It was sold through marketing, not because it offered something new.

And this goes for game settings. Traditional high fantasy and sci-fi adventures are those that sell, and unless you prove otherwise, the marketing forces are going to dictate the staple settings. Outlaws was under-rated, but was that because people didn't race to it's genre setting? The days of kids playing cowboys and Indians is over, the lure of being the Lone Ranger is gone. So I'd highly question the mass-market potential of a western.

I hope the mafia games do well, and that even *Braveheart* with its Scots setting and *Shogun* with the feudal Japan tilt do sufficient business to allow more developers to specialize their games in interesting historical periods. But thus far it's yet to be proved whether there's enough gamer interest outside those post-apocalyptic futures.

—Rob

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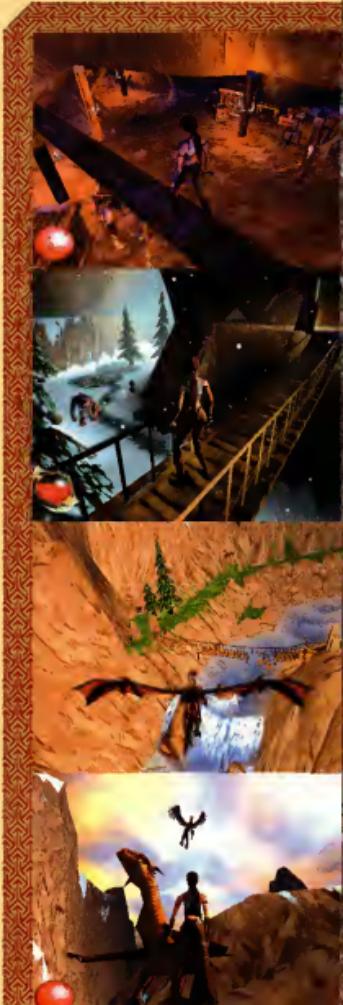impressive technology
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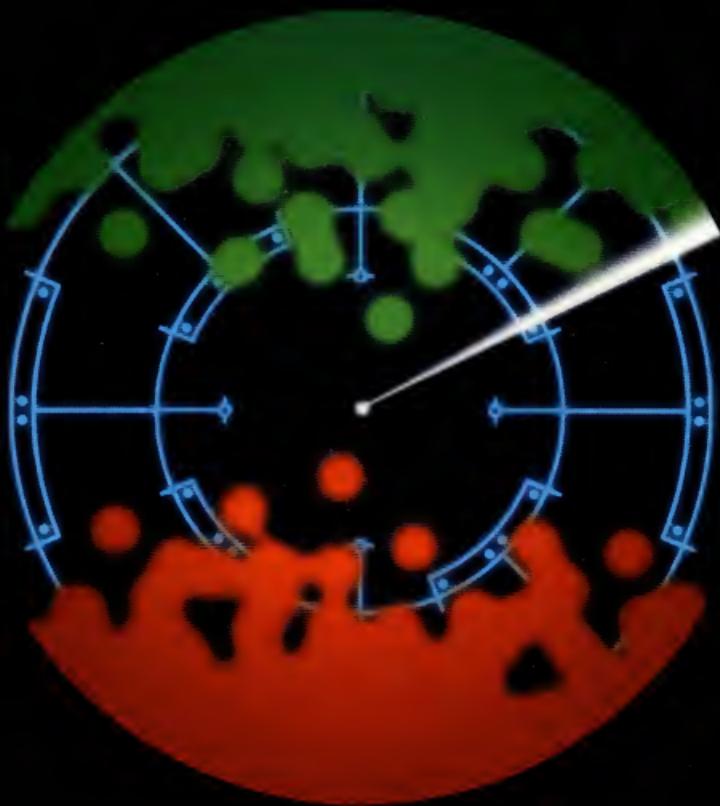
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